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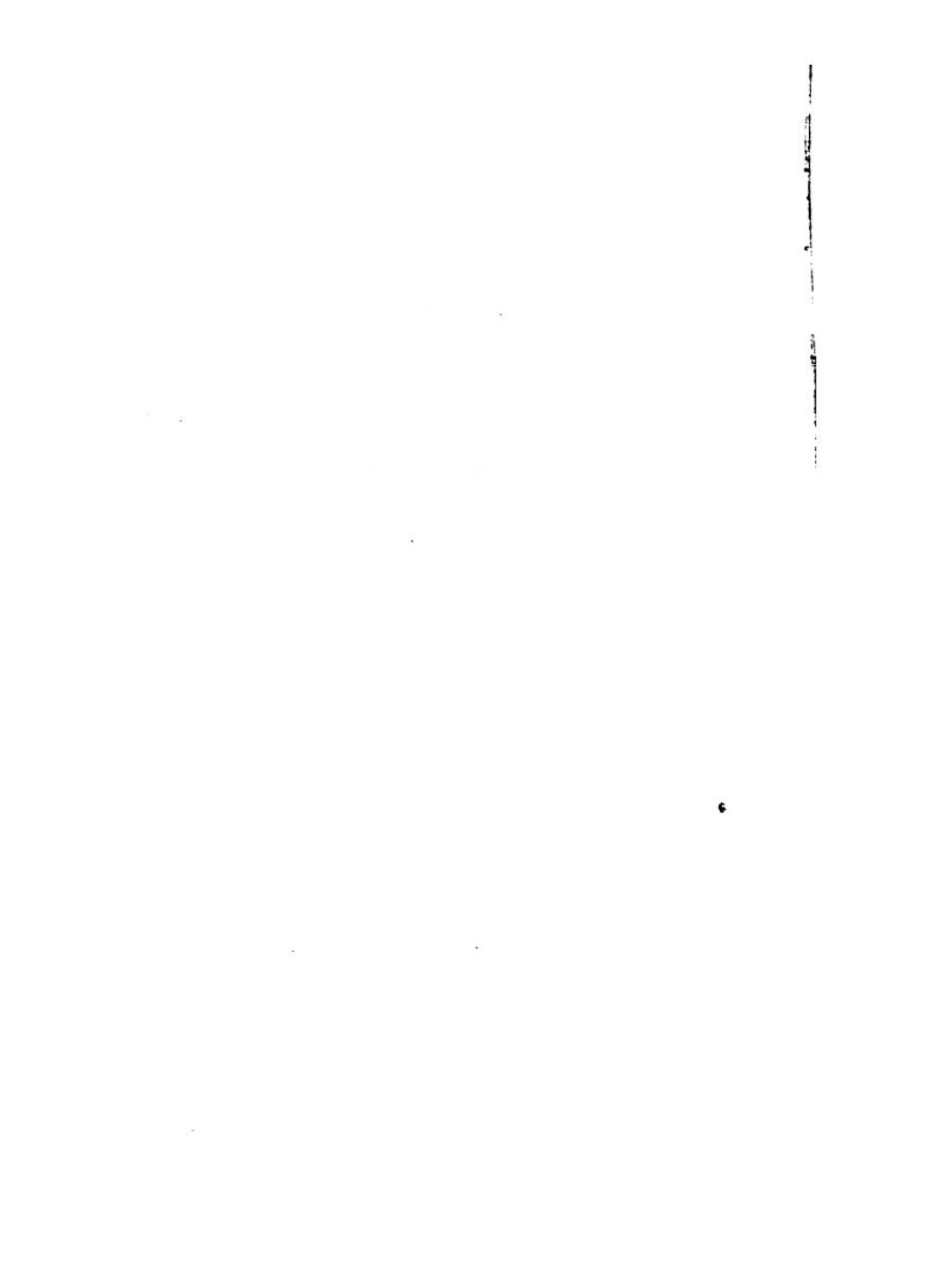
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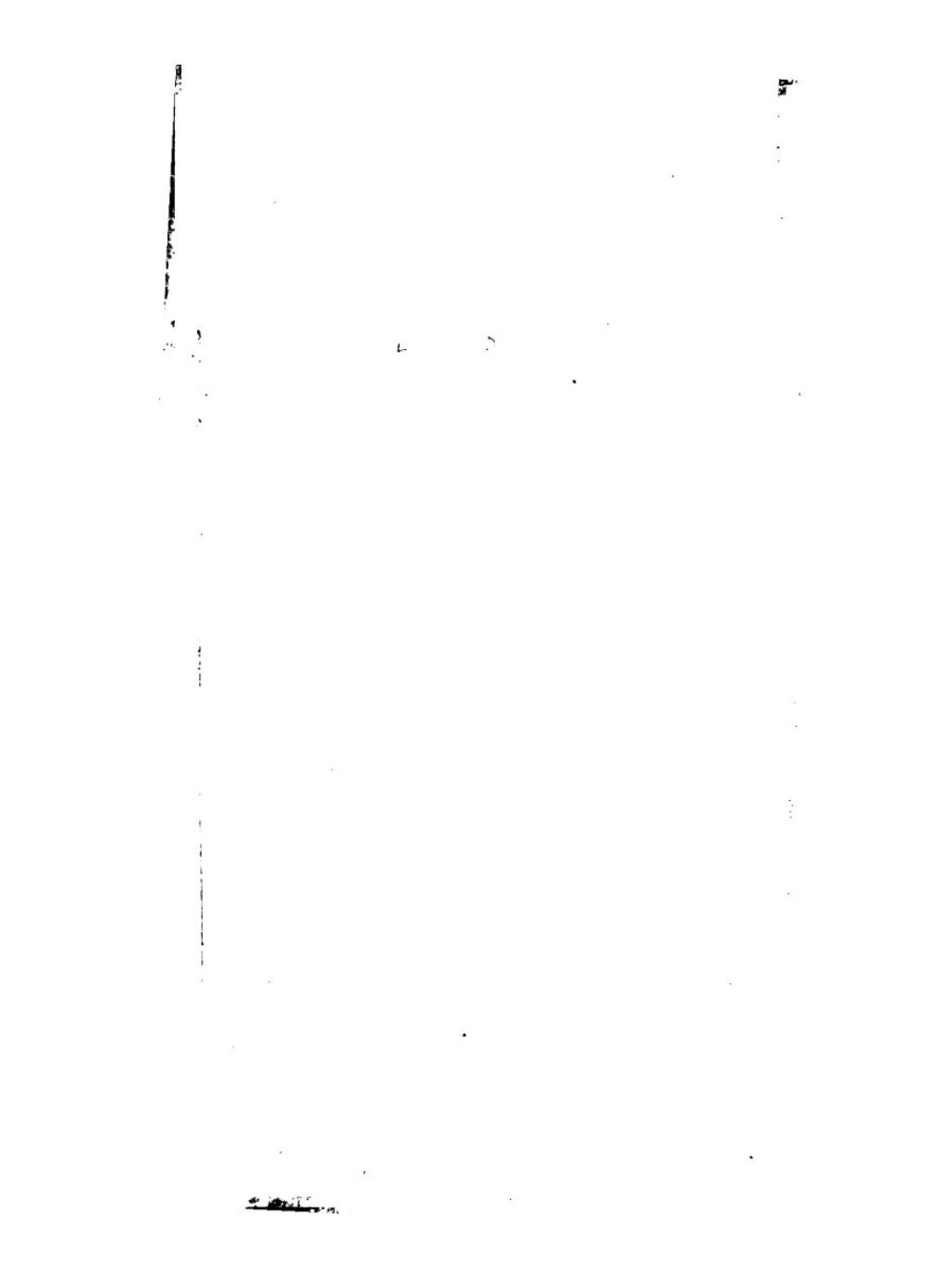




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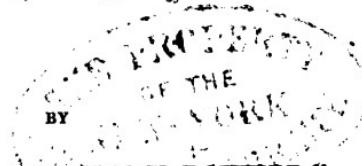
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A  
BLE PURPOSE NOBLY WON.

An old, old Story.



THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

A. Manning

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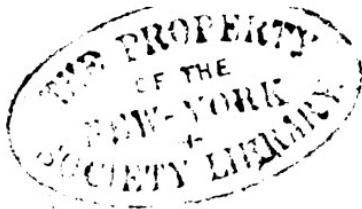
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A

## NOBLE PURPOSE NOBLY WON.

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### CHAPTER I.

WHEN poet, dramatist, painter, and sculptor have laboured their best, there remains no excuse for retouching their work, unless we can add traits which bring us nearer to truth.

I can honestly say this has been my conscientious aim, while pursuing with continually increasing interest a task on which I entered with animation and zeal. This zeal has carried me, with scarcely any help, through several hundred pages of dog-Latin,—easier, perhaps, than if it were classical, to one who never

learnt the language. But I could pick out what I wanted best for myself: a word, a phrase sometimes had a light for me only. On the other hand, I have sometimes advisedly omitted things that I knew would be popular, as carrying a certain dash with them. Some will thank me, some will not; but, either way, —“such is the custom of Branksome Hall.”

For once, I fight under the *fleur-de-lis*, and I shall verify a few details as I proceed.

An old tree on a hillock; a young girl standing under it. That is a subject simple enough to require no great extent of canvas. A young girl, brown and ruddy; her clothing scant and of the coarsest, but whole, and neat, and clean. She wears a cherry-coloured petticoat, blue woollen hose, and sabots. Her eyes are dark brown, kindly, and lustrous, like those of a deer or a kid; her lips cherry-red, her hands and arms well formed, but inured to labour;



her figure erect, well made, and of middle height.

The old tree is a beech of great age and great size, with curiously curved branches, its bark bleached with years, mottled and encrusted with fine green-grey moss. It stands forward a little in advance of a hoary wood; it is the home of thousands of living things, whose separate colonies exist upon it undisturbed except in so far as they prey on one another: from the squirrels, jays, sparrows, and linnets up above, to the swarms of tiny insects on the trunk, and the small quadrupeds that burrow among the mushrooms and truffles at its root. It is believed to have other denizens also—fairies, who troop out to dance under it by moonlight. It is called “The Fairies’ Tree,” “The Ladies’ Tree:” it is the subject of many day-dreams. If you could stand under it (but it has perished) you

would have day-dreams too.\* Then there is a haunted stream flowing round it, from a sacred fountain: that is the Bethesda, the Siloam of the neighbourhood, and boasts strange properties of healing. The young people of the village are accustomed to lead their dances beneath the favourite tree, and hang votive garlands on its boughs: the village priest comes once a year to say mass under it.†

Hard by is an ancient little chapel dedi-

\* Edmond Richer, témoin oculaire, écrivait, "Les branches de ce fau sont toutes rondes, et rendent une belle et grande ombre pour s'abriter dessous, comme presque l'on feroit au couvert d'une chambre. Et faut que cet arbre aye pour le moins trois cents ans, qui est une merveille de nature." Cet arbre n'existe plus, mais le souvenir s'en est conservé dans le pays.—*Procès de Condamnation et de Réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, tom. ii. p. 390.

† "L'église se défaït toujours des vieilles divinités locales; le curé, pour les chasser, allait chaque année dire une messe à la fontaine."—*Michelet*.

cated to the Virgin, with a little hermitage beside it.\*

With hands clasped upon her head, the young girl stands entranced beneath the beech. Suddenly she exclaims “Why, the shadow reaches the brook—it must be past vesper!” and begins to run with all her might towards the village, till she meets an old man coming along with a bunch of keys.

“Are vespers over?” cries she in dismay.

“Aye, aye,” answered the old sacristan, wagging his head, “else I should not be going home.”

“Why, I never heard the bell ring!”

“Because the bell never rang.”

\* “. . . une chapelle très ancienne, qui depuis s'est écroulée. En 1835, un propriétaire du pays entreprit de la réparer. On trouva dans les décombres l'épitaphe d'un ermite mort en 1583, des statuettes de bois, et une cloche.”—*Procès*, ii. 389.

"Ah, how bad of you!" exclaimed the girl, in disappointment. "Why did not you ring it?"

"People who have never tried it, don't know how hard bell-ringing is," said the sacristan, plodding onward. "They that want the bell to ring should pay the ringer. Fie, fie, what a fuss about nothing! Those who have a mind for prayers will come without the bell, and they that want the mind won't come for all the ringing."

"I have a mind to come, but how can I know, out in the fields, what the time is, if I don't hear the bell?"

"Bah! do you think I am going to ring it for you alone? If I do, you ought to pay for it."

"Why, so I would if I could," said poor Joan, rummaging in her apology for a pocket, "Here is my only piece of money, and I will

give it to you if you will but ring the bell in future."

"In future is a long time," said he, after examining and ringing the coin, and then pocketing it; "but I will ring once in a way for you, my lass, and much good may it do you!" Saying which, he went onward.

"What were you saying to the sacristan?" said a brisk, black-eyed girl, coming up from behind, and laying her hand on Joan's shoulder.

"I was giving him my only piece of money, Haumette," said Joan, "to ring for vespers."

"The old rogue ought to do that without your paying him," said Haumette; "and, besides, do you know, people wonder at your going so often to church."\*

\* "Dixit quod ipsa Johanna erat bona, simplex, et dulcis filia, ac ibat libenter et saepe ad ecclesiam et loca sacra, et saepe habebat verecundiam eo quod gentes dice-

Joan coloured, and said, "What business is it of theirs, if I leave nothing I ought to do undone?"

"Indeed that is more than I can say. Most people pray too seldom, rather than too often. Where have you been all day?"

"Keeping the sheep: and since I folded them, I have been standing a little under the Fairies' Tree."

"That is not a good place, I think," said Haumette, "to frequent by one's self."

"Why, it is scarcely a stone's throw from home."

"No; but you know what your godmother says she has seen there;\* and they might bant sibi quod nimis devote ibat ad ecclesiam."—*Testimony of Haumette, upon oath, two-and-twenty years afterwards. Procès de Réh.*, ii. 418.

\* "Dixit per suum juramentum quod, de arbore quae dicitur Dominarum audivit alias dici quod mulieres et personæ fatales que vocabantur *fées*, ibant antiquitus

draw you in, and we should all wonder what had become of you."

"That would be an uncomfortable end," said Joan, thoughtfully. "I should not like the fairies to draw me underground ; but I can hardly think such power would be given them. There is the more need to pray for

choreatum sub illa arbore; sed, ut dicitur, postquam evangelium beati Johannis legitur et dicitur, amplius non vadunt. Dixit etiam quod, modernis temporibus, in dominica qua cantatur in sancta Dei ecclesia in introitu missæ *Lætare Jherusalem*, in istis partibus vulgariter dicta *des Fontaines*, puellæ et juvenes de Dompno-Remigio vadunt subtus illam arborem (et aliquotiens tempore veris et æstates, diebus festivis) ad choreandum, et aliquando ibidem comedunt, et redeundo veniunt supra fontem ad rannos,<sup>1</sup> spatiando et cantando, et de aqua illius fontis bibunt, et circumcirca ludendo flores colligunt. Dixit etiam quod ipsa Johanna 'la Pucelle' cum aliis puellis, dictis temporibus aliquotiens ibat, et sicut coeteræ faciebat," &c.—*Testimony of Jean Morel, labourer*, ii. 390.

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<sup>1</sup> Aujourd'hui la fontaine des groseillers.

heavenly protection. But see that old soldier sitting by the wayside ! He looks very tired, and very poor. How sorry I am I have no money ! Have you any ? ”

“ Not a sou ,” said Haumette.

“ We can speak to him kindly, at any rate. Good evening, father.”

“ Good evening, daughter. Pity a poor old disabled soldier ! ”

“ Where did you get wounded, you poor old man ? ”

“ Fighting the English and Burgundians. See, I have had my right arm shattered by a culverin, and can fight no longer. And see this cut over my left eye, and this on my cheekbone, to match it .”

“ Ah, poor old man, it is festering ! If you will come home with me, I will wash it in milk, and cover it with a plaster. Will you come ? ”

“ To be sure I will,” said he, gratefully, lay-

ing firm hold on her with his left hand, as she helped him to rise. “ You see I can wield no weapon now, so I am discharged, and going home to my friends ; and I had a little money, too, but, however, the routiers eased me of that, and gave me a drubbing besides—I owe these fresh bruises to them.”

“ What a shame ! ” said Haumette.

“ And where are you going ? ” said Joan.

“ To Neufchâteau,” replied he, “ where I hope to end my days.”

“ I know Neufchâteau very well,” said Joan. “ Once when the Burgundians came upon us, we fled with our herds, flocks, and whatever we could carry or drive before us, and took refuge at Neufchâteau, where we remained fifteen days, and were under great obligations to the kind people of the place. I went every morning to matins, in the crypt of St. Nicholas, as I dare say you have done. Ah ! what a splendid

Calvary there is in the south aisle of the church ! There you behold our Blessed Saviour, the size of life, exactly as if he had just expired—every vein and muscle to be seen, and the drops of blood oozing from his wounds. And there is Joseph of Arimathea, looking sorry, and our Blessed Lady, plunged in grief, and St. Mary Magdalene, and Nicodemus, the centurion clutching his hand—Oh, I want to see it ! ”

“ It does me good to hear you talk,” said the old man. “ Pray, where did you lodge at Neufchâteau ? ”

“ At the hostelry called La Providence, kept by Jean and Gertrude La Rousse.”

“ At La Providence ? Why, that is where I am going ! Jean La Rousse is my young brother.”

“ Oh, how strange ! ” exclaimed Joan, stopping short. “ Then that is a good reason .

we, who were so well treated at La Providence, should give you a supper and night's lodging, for it is too far for you to go, now the days are so short. I am sure my father and mother will gladly receive you."

"Who are your father and mother, my girl?"

"My father is only a poor labouring man—a small farmer. His name is Jacques Darc.\* My mother's name is Isabelle, or, as we say, Zabillet."†

"You will have no room for the soldier," said Haumette, abruptly, "unless you give up to him your own bed. Come home with me, and share mine; I have often shared yours."

"Oh, no! I can lie in the granary; I did once before."

\* "C'est l'orthographe que suit Jean Fordal, descendant d'un frère de la Pucelle."—*Michelet.*

† Isabelle d'Arc, alias Romée, née à Vouthon, près de Domremy, et appelée dans le patois du pays, Zabillet. *Procès*, ii. 74.

"Very well, then ; adieu."

And, kissing her, Haumette turned away.

"What good saint or angel brought you to me, you kind girl ?" said the old soldier, as he limped along beside Joan. "Heaven will reward you for it, though I cannot. Yes, yes, you will look over our heads some of these days, and when you die you will wear a crown of glory, full of amethysts, diamonds, sapphires, and all manner of precious stones."

"Ah," said Joan, "heaven will be heaven to me, poor girl, whether my crown be of pearls or roses. There I shall see St. Catherine and St. Margaret, and especially the blessed Mother of our Lord, whom I worship day and night."

"Your talk is quite edifying," said the old man ; "we rough fellows have too little time to attend to such things ; however, I have never gone into action without kissing the

cross of my sword, which I concluded would be accepted when no more could be done. But hark ! there's fighting toward. I hear a fray at a distance, and the old war-cries of Burgundy and Armagnac."

" Oh ! " said Joan, smiling, " it is only the lads of the village, who are having a mock fight with the youths of the next parish. They do it to keep their hands in, I think. My youngest brother, Pierre, brought home a terrible black eye lately, some one having hit him with a stone in a bag."

" That was foul play," said the old soldier. " A brave warrior respects the face and limbs of his adversary."

The cottage stood on the skirt of the hoary wood. An old horse looked over the gate of a field hard by it; he seemed to be ruminating on the state of France, and to think it a bad job.

## CHAPTER II.

"SEE," said Joan, "there is our cottage; and my mother is at the door, looking out for me. . . . Mother!" cried she, running up to her, "here is a poor soldier, both wounded and weary, who is on his way to Neufchâteau, and who has been attacked by the routiers. He is brother to Jean La Rousse, who keeps La Providence: \* will not you give him a night's lodging?"

"So!—you remember La Providence," said Zabillet, eyeing him keenly. "Have you seen it since the old sycamore facing the north door blew down?"

"There is no north door to La Providence,"

\* Procès, i. 51.

replied the old soldier; “and the sycamore you speak of cannot have been very old, since it was not even planted in my time.”

“ You are right,” said Zabillet, “ I only sought to prove whether your word was to be taken or not, which the badness of the times must excuse, though it showed incivility to a stranger. Come in; I am glad to requite your brother’s kindness. You shall sup with us, though I cannot offer you a bed, unless you will sleep in the granary.”

“ I will do so, mother,” interposed Joan.

“ Be it so then,” said Zabillet. “ We are but little folks, but yet, I trust, we can give of our best, such as it is, to a stranger.”

Saying this, she made way for him to pass into the kitchen, which was pretty large and paved with stone. There was a massive and rather handsome fireplace, and a raftered

ceiling, from which depended ropes of onions, strings of dried apples and pears, and bunches of pot-herbs; while baskets, bags, a straw hat or two, and various tools hung on pegs. A cherry-wood *armoire* held the household valuables, but there was neither ballad on the wall nor book on the window-seat, for not one of the family could read. A tame magpie was hopping about, now and then saying “Jeannette! Jeannette! Jacquemin!” and a queer-looking shepherd’s dog and very old cat kept watch and ward over a steaming skillet on the fire.

“Sit down, sit down,” said Zabillet, hospitably. “My good man and boys will soon come in to supper.”

“Meanwhile I will wash his wounds, mother, which are beginning to fester,” said Joan.

“That will be an act of mercy,” said Zabillet, looking into them herself. “I have a decoc-

tion in the *armoire* that will, I think, give great relief."

"How came you by this cut, old friend?" said Joan, as she tenderly bathed it.

"An Englishman gave it me," said he.

"Are they not terrible wretches, those English?"

"Well, their lords and great captains are famous good soldiers, it must be owned, or they would not so beat us; but the men they bring over are the mere scum of the country, whom they are glad to get killed off.\* These fellows come into action for the most part without any armour, and in jackets, bare-footed, and without hats, with immense big bows in their hands, a bundle of arrows at their backs, and hatchets, or, it may be, wooden

\* "Some of the great (English) lords were killed; and the rest were people of low degree, of the same sort as those whom they were accustomed to bring from their own country to die in France."—*Johnes' Monstrelet*, i. 555.

mallets at their girdles.\* They let fly their arrows to begin with, as high as possible, not to lose their effect, twanging their bow-strings till they whistle again! and then, down with their bows, up with their mallets, bill-hooks, hatchets, or whatever comes handy,—and at us with a will!"

"A downright Jacquerie!" said Joan. "Are those the sort of men that are to rob us of our best provinces, and chase our king into a corner of his dominions?"

"Our Dauphin is not king till he has been anointed and crowned at Rheims," said the old soldier.

"I think him so," replied she, "and so ought you. King Charles the Seventh."

"He ought to be, I grant you, but he isn't."

"What a shame, then, that the people don't

\* Monstrelet, i. 341-342.

rise as one man, and carry him through ! I would, if I were a man."

" You ? " said the old man, smiling. " Well, there *is* an old prophecy—Merlin made it, I think—that France should be rescued by a maid."

" Who was Merlin—a saint ? "

" No ; an enchanter."

" Enchanters are dangerous people," said Zabillet, coming from the *armoire* with a rag dipped in the decoction, which had " a fine, venomous smell." " They get their knowledge not from God but from the devil ; and even when they tell you true, they deal in double meanings, which may be taken opposite ways, and you never know which was the right till too late ; or else they tag their information with conditions, and draw you in and in, and on and on, till you don't know where you are, and are lost, may be, soul and body. I have a

very ill opinion of enchanters, and should never wish a child of mine to have anything to do with them."

"That's neither here nor there," said the old soldier.—"Hallo! this smarts!—Now, it is very cool and pleasant, though. I should like to know the secret of this stuff, though on the battle-field we mostly use a mixture of oil and lard.\* Merlin, I was going to say, has been dead or translated this ever so long, and was carried off, I think, to fairy-land, in a chariot drawn by dragons."

"Where *is* fairy-land, I wonder?" said Joan.

"Why, now, there's a question for a sensible girl to ask!" said the soldier. "You might just as well say where is purgatory? and yet we all know it is somewhere; and so is fairy-land; or else where do the fairies come from?"

\* Barante.

“ Just so ; that’s plain enough,” said Zabillet, conclusively ; “ only Joan was always such a girl for asking questions. Jeannette, your father is coming in, you may pour out the soup.”

When Jacques Darc came in from the plough, he was made acquainted with what we know already ; and he welcomed the old soldier with a cordiality which we, of the class by which this little narrative is likely to be read, too seldom show, and, indeed, can hardly credit. Why, this old fellow might be a regular rogue and vagabond ! — loafing about from house to house on false pretences ! And, doubtless, there were plenty who did so in those unsettled times, when there were no unions, nor overseers, like “ porter John,” who rewarded the poor with a thump on the back with a stone.

However that might be, it is an uncontested, historical fact, that this poor family were ever ready to succour and shelter the distressed,

more especially when they had bled for their country, and that Joan would even give up her bed to them. “Elle vit arriver les pauvres fugitifs, elle aida, la bonne fille, à les recevoir; elle leur cédait son lit et allait coucher au grenier.”\*

Jacques Darc, a fine, stalwart old peasant, tall, but a little bent, and with his honest, earnest-looking face lined with a network of minute wrinkles, sat down facing his guest, with a hand on each knee, and asked him his name; to which he replied,—

“Pierre La Rousse, master.”

“You need not say ‘master,’ ” observed Jacques, “for I am master of no one except my three sons. The youngest is named Peter, like yourself, and has a hankering for your trade, I’m afraid, for he is much given to fighting.”

\* Michelet.

"Perhaps he may serve his country some of these days," said La Rousse.

"I would rather he threshed corn," replied Jacques. "See, now, what a country this might be for crops! We have had a beautiful summer, but so little grain was sown that there was not much to gather in. Between this and Vaucouleurs we might raise corn enough to feed all France, were there but hands to till the ground. Instead of which, all the likely lads are wanted for soldiers; and the neighbourhood has been so often overrun by plunderers, that one has not the heart to sow what he may never eat, but just lives from hand to mouth."

"If you complain of things as they are here," said La Rousse, "what would you do if you were on the seat of war? I come from Jargeau, where we have been beaten by the Earl of Salisbury; the storming of that place

was dreadful. He has since taken Genville, Mehun, and several castles and forts, and has now sat down before Orleans, the very key of the country. How long it will hold out, Heaven only knows, but it is to be feared its fall will only be a question of time. But oh! if you had but seen the desolation, even before the English came in sight! To deprive them of cover, the citizens demolished with their own hands every castle, convent, and country-house in the suburbs, as well as twelve churches belonging to the four orders of mendicant friars; by which means they could discharge cannon from their ramparts all round the town."

"Joan, Joan, mind the soup, and don't spill it!" cried her mother.

Three stout, healthy youths here came in, and, after a few words, dropped into their places, and began eating their supper with

avidity. The two eldest were true sons of the soil, but were alike, with a difference; for Jacquemin, round-shouldered, sluggish, and of few words, had a touch of sentiment in him which few would have dreamed of; while Jeannot, a fine specimen of rustic strength, would have made a good man-at-arms. Pierre, the youngest, was an ardent-looking, black-eyed boy, who listened with eager interest to whatever was said by the soldier. There were two wooden bowls and three spoons, one of which was sequestered to the stranger, the second was shared by the father and mother, and the third used in rotation by their children. This allowed intervals for polite conversation.

“ You come from Orleans, then ? ” said Jacques, passing his spoon to his wife.

“ Yes ; but it was only preparing for defence when I left it. Being disabled, I should not

have been worth my bread. In a little while they will be eating dogs, cats, and carrion crows."

The lads here exchanged glances, and then ate their soup with additional relish.

"Processions were going from church to church; even the elder citizens were learning the use of arms, and those who were too weak to fight, engaged in prayer. The Dauphin, believing that the loss of this important city will be the finishing stroke to himself and his kingdom, has sent thither his most noble captains—the noble Poton de Saintrailles, the Sire de Gaucourt, the brave La Hire, and especially, the flower of them all, the Count de Dunois, base son to the late Duke of Orleans."

"I have heard of that young gentleman," said Jacques, "and of most of the others too, though we of the border, here, do not get French news very fresh."

"Father," cried Joan, abruptly, "this good old soldier tells us there is an old prophecy that France shall be saved by a young maiden!"

"By you, no doubt," said he, drily, at which there was a general laugh.

"I do not see what there is to laugh about," said she. "Tell me, old man, did the enchanter say whereabouts the young maiden was to be found?"

"Aye, aye," replied he; "between Colombey and Vaucouleurs."

"Curious, that," said she, in an undertone; "I wonder who the maiden is."

"Jeannette, Jeannette!" said the magpie.

"Joan, don't you see we have all done?" said her mother. "Clear the table, wash up, and fetch your distaff."

"Yes, mother. Just tell me, old man, why you are so assured that Orleans will be lost?"

"Nay, my lass, the English and Burgun-

dians united are in such strength, and are building bastilles all round the town, to hem it in. They have such able leaders—Lord Salisbury, Lord Suffolk, Sire Talbot, and especially a man who breathes fire at his very nostrils, surnamed Glacidas."

"But if our people were to unite against them as one man, might they not win the day, even yet?"

"No doubt of it," said he.

"Then why do not they?"

"Heaven knows. The people are cowed; and the Dauphin, though a sweet young prince, is too inert."

"What is he like?"

"Oh! he is fair to see—smooth-faced, with wavy hair and deep blue eyes, that are kindly rather than fierce, like those of the murdered Duke of Orleans."

"But is he brave? is he good?"

"Aye, aye, my lass," said the old man.

"I will remember him in my prayers," said she.

"Sin brings sorrow," said Jacques Darc, abruptly. "If that duke had not been so vain of being a lady-killer, nor boasted that the Duchess of Burgundy loved him, he would not have been slain by the duke, nor would the Duke of Burgundy in his turn have been slain."

"Oh ! that is going back to Eve's apple. Perhaps you will sing us a song, young man," said La Rousse to the eldest youth.

"I don't care if I do," said Jacquemin, scraping his throat, "though my voice is only middling. What will you have? '*Colin et Colette*,' '*Gentil Désir*,' or '*The Complainings of the poor Commoners and Labourers of France*'?"

"The last by all means," said La Rousse;

"for we shall be ready to cry amen to every line."

So at it he went, in the following manner, though a few lines will suffice as a specimen, seeing that the whole composition is not much shorter than the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm.

"Ah ! princes, prelates, valiant lords,  
Lawyers and tradesfolk, small and great,  
Burghers and warriors, girt with swords,  
Who fatten on our daily sweat,  
To labouring hinds some comfort give,  
Whate'er betide, we needs must live.

"But live we cannot long, we trow,  
If God deny his powerful aid  
Against the poor man's cruel foe,  
Who doth our goods by force invade,  
And, flouting us with pride and scorn,  
Beareth away our wine and corn."\*

The effect of this ballad, or homily, was sedative rather than enlivening, especially

\* Translated by the Rev. W. Shepherd; for Johnes.

when sung to a tune that was always falling into a minor, and got at least two notes flatter as it proceeded, Jacquemin singing entirely through his nose, or else as if he had a lock of wool in his throat; sometimes abruptly pausing, to recover the words, and then going on again when every one thought he had done.

“Well, that’s enough to put any one to sleep,” said Zabillet, by way of encouragement, when he had finished. “Pierre, thou art snoring already. Go to bed this instant. And you too, Joan. Why are you resting your head upon your hand? Are you ill, or only tired?”

Joan looked ashamed, and took up her distaff.

“There, there,” said Zabillet, more kindly, “put away thy spinning, and go to bed. Leave off dreaming with thine eyes open and brooding upon matters too deep for thee, and say

thy prayers, and the Lord will watch over thee."

"Yes, mother." And Joan thankfully stole off, with an armful of her belongings, to the granary, where, like Griseldis, "she made her bed full hard, and nothing soft."

"That's a nice, tidy, likely lass of yours," observed La Rousse to Jacques, as Zabillet bestirred herself in the early closing movement.

"The girl's a good girl enough," replied he, rather pleased, "when she leaves alone her dreamings and thinkings. But she is given to strange vagaries. She was scarce thirteen when she came in one day about noon from the garden, looking quite dazed, and told her mother, who had sent her for some pot-herbs, that she was standing there all alone, when suddenly there shined a bright light all about her, and she heard an unknown voice say,

‘Continue to be a good girl, Joan, and God will bless thee.’ ”

“Hum! What thought you of that?” said La Rousse.

“What thought I of it? Why, if she had been a deceitful girl, I should have thought it a lie, but I never caught her lying in my life. I therefore suppose she was only in one of her dreams, when the sun happened to shine out from behind a cloud, and that somebody passing along outside the hedge, unseen, said those words. That’s what I make of it.”

“I never agreed with thee, though, father, about that,” said Zabillet, “and that thou very well knows.”

“Yes, yes, I know, mother. Another thing was curious,” said he, dropping his voice mysteriously; “I had a dream, one night, a very forcible dream, that I saw Joan riding along with some soldiers. But sooner than that

should come to pass," said he, throwing out his hands with sudden vehemence, " I'd drown her with these hands. Or, an' if I were dead, that Jacquemin there should do it! Thou hears me, Jacquemin?"

"Aye, aye, father," said Jacquemin, soberly.

"Come!" said Zabillet, "it is high time we should be abed and asleep."

## CHAPTER III.

THE old man slept heavily, and when he awoke in the morning, he found all but his hostess dispersed on their several avocations.

"Where is the young girl?" said he, as he thankfully accepted a bowl of milk and a piece of black bread.

"Joan is at her prayers," replied Zabillet. "She has been good at them ever since she could speak, for I taught her betimes that prayer was the direct road to heaven; and to peace on earth too—that peace which comes of a quiet mind."

"Good mothers make good daughters," observed La Rousse. "I would willingly have seen her again; however, give her my thanks and blessing for bringing me to this hospitable roof."

"I wish you a safe journey," returned Zabillet; "and am glad to have had an opportunity of showing that I remembered your brother's kindness to us at La Providence."

Meanwhile, Joan, kneeling before the altar of the village church, which was scarcely a stone's throw from the house, was clasping her hands and pouring out her soul to the two saints to whom it was dedicated, fondly hoping that they would present her prayers more efficaciously than herself at the throne of grace. "Ah, St. Catherine! ah, blessed St. Margaret! intercede for our poor France! why should the wicked say 'Where is now their God?' Oh, when shall there arise a deliverer?"

And she wept and beat her breast; and then arose, poor girl, having availed herself of such helps as she had been taught to use, trusting her prayers would be heard.

“A few sheep, spinning, in the field she kept;  
She woldë not be idle till she slept.”

On her way to the fold, it being yet little past daybreak, she met a young countryman, Raoul Cerisier by name, going to his daily labour.

“Good day, pretty maid,” said he.

“Pretty maid and I have nothing to do together,” said Joan. “However, I wish you a good day and a better mind.”

“What’s the matter with my mind?” said Raoul.

“You are a Burgundian; and I wish all Burgundians at the bottom of the sea.”

“Ha! ha! ha! Who told you I was a Burgundian?”

“Why, are you not?” cried Joan, kindling.

“You know you are. You’re the only Burgundian in Domremy!”

“What then?”

"The Duke of Burgundy is a wicked man, who foments civil war, and takes part with the English. And they who uphold him are like unto him."

"Ha! ha! ha! It is droll: Joan, you amuse me. I should like you to amuse me always. When shall you and I marry?"

"When the sky falls," said she, indignantly.  
"Go your ways."

"The sky is falling now, for I have just felt a drop of rain on my face. Very well! then I'll speak to the priest."

"Go your ways for a saucy jeerer," said Joan, hastening away from him; and Raoul, after looking at her for a minute or two, as she retreated, with a mixture of admiration and mockery, passed on.

She drove the sheep, goats, and two cows to pasture, and sat spinning, hour after hour, under a warm, sheltering hedge. As she

twirled her spindle, she recalled all that the old soldier had said overnight, and tried to piece it together.

"‘A maid shall deliver France?’” repeated she. “‘A maiden between Vaucouleurs and Colombey?’” And thick-coming images arose before her till the distaff dropped from her relaxed grasp, and, with dilated eyes, and parted lips, she saw, or seemed to see, now the chivalry of France sweeping by in fell disorder, over the torn and trampled oriflamme; now the victorious English in full pursuit; now the solitary figure of a kingly youth, leaning despondently on his sword; now, a maiden kneeling at his feet, then rising, addressing him in dumb show, and pointing upward, then placing a crown upon his head, leading him to his war-charger, and bidding him ride forth to conquer.

A change came o’er the scene, which seemed enveloped in turbid clouds, deepening into

absolute darkness—then, gradually melting to a soft, silvery, grey tint, permeated by an exquisitely clear light, that grew brighter and brighter to an almost dazzling intensity. Floating figures then appeared—figures not of this earth, but heavenly-fair, majestic, and saint-like—figures that looked on her with pitying love and tender sweetness, and that at length spoke.

Joan was by this time in a deep sleep or trance, whether in the body or out of the body; she had gently sunk on the turf like a tired child, and lay there with closed eyes, relaxed limbs, and a smile of ineffable sweetness on her lips. Tears presently trickled from beneath her closed lids, and her hands made a faint movement, as if to grasp and retain some receding object. Then she half raised herself with a start, and looked wistfully around and above her.

"They are gone!" said she, softly; and after a pause, full of solemnity, she covered her face, and bent her knees in prayer.

Joan's breakfast that morning had been two apples, and though her mother had given her a slice of bread to stay her young appetite till the family supper, she had privately slipped it into the soldier's wallet. Nothing is more provocative of wild, unearthly fancies than crude, indigestible food, or an empty stomach. For my part, it is my settled belief that at least half the supernatural visitations of famous ascetics, whether coming in the guise of spirits of darkness or angels of light, might be traced to the vegetable diet which filled their brains with vapours and chimeras: but this by the way.

When Joan looked about her, all her sheep were gone! This instantly brought her down from things celestial to things terrestrial; and,

sticking her distaff into her girdle and snatching up her crook, she sped away after them. Two long hours passed before the poor girl could get the flock together again ; it was then full time to drive it to the fold, and by the time she had done this, and was returning, hot and weary, to her home, the sun had set. Again she encountered Raoul Cerisier.

“Joan,” said he, repentantly, as he came up to her, “I’m sorry I spoke so roughly this morning. There’s no one for whom I care more.”

“Then you cannot care much for anybody,” said Joan ; “but it does not signify.”

“Nay, but I care for you a great deal,” said Raoul ; “and—in short, if you’ll have me for your husband, so you shall.”

“Raoul, I wonder at you !” said Joan, angrily. “I have no thoughts of marriage, and, if I had, should never marry you. Go your ways ; my thoughts were full of heavenly

things, and you have brought them down to earth. If you were not a Burgundian, I could tell you something——”

“Tell me, by all means,” said he, standing across her path, so that she could not pass.

“No ; it is not for such ears as yours,” said she, trying to push by him,—“Oh ! there’s the vesper-bell, and I shall be quite too late ; how disappointing !” And tears of mortification started into her eyes.

“One kiss, and then you shall go,” said Raoul.

“Take that !” said Joan, giving him such a box on the ear that the light flashed from his eyes. He could not help laughing ; but she was in anything but a laughing mood, and ran fleetly home, while he stood looking after her, and rubbing his ear.

“Why, Joan, what’s the matter ?” said Zabillet, as she shot into the cottage. “How

late you are ! I wanted you to fetch water from the spring, and scald the milk-pans, and feed the pigs and chickens. Have you done a good day's spinning ? Hoity-toity ! what's this ! ” and she picked up Joan's spindle, with the lock of flax all in a harl, like an untidy boy's kite-string, which he has not taken the trouble to wind up. “ Why, now, Joan ! ”

“ Raoul Cerisier troubled me, and would not let me pass,” said Joan, colouring.

“ Oh ! ” said Zabillet, with a significant look.—“ But, what ! —you have scarcely spun a quarter of your flax ! ”

“ The sheep strayed, mother—”

“ The sheep strayed ? And wherefore, I pray you, came you to let them stray ? Your back has been turned on them, miss, while you gossiped with that idle girl Haumette—”

“ No, indeed, mother ; I have not seen her all day—”

“ Or with that idle fellow Raoul Cerisier—”

“ Raoul Cerisier ! truly he *is* an idle fellow,” said Joan ; “ but yet I saw him but two minutes, going and coming—”

“ Then you’ve been dreaming of him, may be—”

“ No, indeed, mother. The truth is—” and her eyes and voice dropped.

“ Oh ! now we are going to have the truth,” said Zabillet, ironically ; and then, awaiting her communication with some curiosity,—  
“ Well ?—”

“ Mother, if you look in that way, I *cannot* tell you.”

“ Come, come ! ” said Zabillet, softening, however.

“ Mother, I was keeping the sheep, when all at once a bright light shined around me.”

“ Well ! ”

“ It was not the light of sun or moon, I

think, but softer, yet brighter, than either.  
And then I heard a rustling, like as of silky  
garments ; and I was 'ware of—”

“ What ? ”

“ Two bright ladies,” said Joan, with awe.

“ Two bright ladies ? ”

“ And with them a noble gentleman—*un  
vray prud'homme.* ”

“ And who was the *vray prud'homme ?* ”

“ I think,” said Joan, faltering, “ that he  
was the archangel Michael.”

“ Joan,” cried Zabillet, with exasperation,  
“ will you never have done with such non-  
sense ? ”

“ Mother ! I saw him with these eyes, as  
plainly as I see you now.”

“ And what might he say to you ? ”

“ He told me I should crown the king and  
raise the siege of Orleans.”

“ This passes patience ! ” exclaimed her

mother. "Hark you, Joan; I have done my best to bring you up in the ways of godliness, and above all, to abhor lying."

"I have told no lies," said Joan, bursting into tears.

"I never caught you in one till this moment," pursued Zabillet, "and I hope I never shall again, for I would rather you had never been born than that you should depart from the ways of truthfulness. Poor we are, and homely; but honest and sincere we have always been."

"Mother," sobbed Joan, "why won't you believe me?"

"How *can* I?" said Zabillet, rapidly. "Better own one fault at first than worsen it by making false excuses. You went out of this house this morning a good and innocent girl; how you have since been spending or misspending your time I know not, though

I shall be sure to know soon or late, but most likely with idle companions ; in proof of it, your sheep were lost, your flax unspun, you come back hot and weary, and with your clothes looking as if you had been dragging them through every hedge ; and, to cover all this to your too kind mother, you invent an absurd story, a *profane* story, I may call it, about St. Michael and I don't know what all."

"I would scorn it," said Joan, crying.

"Scorn it and welcome, my lass, from this time forth for evermore, or all the world will scorn *you*. St. Michael, forsooth ! What should possess you to go and take the name of that worthy gentleman in vain ? Oh fie, child ! fie for shame ! I thought I had taught you better. And the two grand ladies, too ! St. Catherine and St. Margaret, no doubt ! I am glad you did not venture to bring in our

Blessed Lady. Pray, how might they be dressed?"

"I hardly marked their dresses, mother," said Joan, drying her eyes, and trying to command her trembling voice. "But yet, I think they were in a kind of—something all over shiny."

"There, there, don't go on inventing, for pity's sake," interrupted Zabillet, with contempt and aversion, "or you will only make bad worse. Something all over shiny, indeed! A likely thing, for saints of the first quality, that might wear every colour in the rainbow, to be dressed so as that you could help taking notice. Thou 'rt a very poor fabricator, child, after all, and I pray thou mayst never mend by practice. Repeat this all to the priest at thy next confession, and don't be surprised if he puts thee to some good wholesome penance. Meanwhile, to begin with, I desire that you will strictly hold your tongue till bed-time."

"But, mother!—"

"Silence! not a word!" said Zabillet, imperatively. "If you speak again, you shall be silent for a week; and you know, Joan, I will be obeyed."

Joan sighed acquiescence.

"And you may fill up your time by unreaving all this tangle," said her mother, pushing her distaff towards her, "and spinning it right off."

Joan humbly obeyed, and was glad of some mechanical employment. Just at this time, her father and brothers came home from work, and looked disappointed enough at not finding supper ready.

"How's this?" said Jacques Darc, in surprise. "Joan, wench, bestir thyself. This is no time to be spinning."

"Joan will mind what she is set about," said Zabillet, sharply, as she poured out the

soup. "She has been misbehaving herself, and is in penitence."

"Fie on it!" muttered Jacques, while his sons exchanged expressive looks and shrugged their shoulders. Two large tears dropped on Joan's apron; seeing which, her youngest brother immediately went up to her and took her hand.

"Come to your suppers, children," said Zabillet, shortly. "Come, *you*, Joan! Don't sulk."

Joan instantly obeyed.

"Joan never sulks," muttered Pierre.

"Hold your tongue, sir!"

Dead silence.

"How mum we all are!" cried Jeannot, at length. "As dull as dormice. Can't you be saying something, Joan?"

"Joan," interposed Zabillet, "is to hold her tongue till bed-time. It is a penance."

"*Ma foi !*" said Jeannot, getting up from table. "Then I shall go and look after Matthieu." This Matthieu was the scamp of the neighbourhood.

"Jeannot, *don't !*" said his mother, in desperation. But Jeannot was gone.

"Never mind, mother," said Jacquemin; "I'll go and fetch him back."

But Jacquemin went after him, and did not return. As for Pierre, he drummed on the floor with his sabots, teased the cat, tormented the magpie, and pulled the dog's tail; till his mother said, "You had better go to bed." As soon as Joan had finished her spinning, she was sent to bed also. Then said Jacques Darc to his wife, "Mother, how could you think of silencing that girl, and making us all as stupid as owls? You had much better have given her a good thump on the head."

## CHAPTER IV.

“FATHER,” said Zabillet, after looking cautiously round, to be ensured against eaves-droppers, “I don’t think Joan’s head will bear much thumping. It has been quite as grievous to me as it can have been to you, to put the poor dear lass in disgrace, but the case demanded it. Mischief is best nipped in the bud ; you may trample an acorn, but not an oak. Here she has been at her dreaming and visioning again, and depones to having seen St. Michael the archangel, I warrant you !”

“Aye, aye ?” cried Jacques, looking hard at her.

“And two female saints,” continued Zabillet, “dressed in unimaginable gowns.”

"What did they say to her?"

"*She* says that *he* said, and *they* said, that she should put the king on the throne of France."

"Whew!—" said Jacques, with a low whistle.

"And how does she mean to set about it?"

"Heaven knows!"

"I should think so! This is worse and worse. Her imaginings become more and more dangerous. We must beat it out of her, mother, I think?"

"Ah, no!—she will never stand it."

"What say you to sousing it out of her with cold water?"

"I hope never to live to see my daughter treated like a witch," said Zabillet. "The matter is not so bad as that."

"No; but there's no saying what it may come to. Suppose we get the priest to exorcise her."

"That would be treating her as if she were

possessed by the evil one," said Zabillet, reproachfully.

"And may not she be?"

"I wonder to hear you, father, talk so of your own daughter. May not the child have had intercourse with heaven, after all? The worst of it is, I fear it may only be an idle tale, to account for her letting the sheep go astray and neglecting her spinning."

"Idle tale! *wicked* tale, mother! How durst the jade lose the sheep?"

"Ah, well, they're all found again, and she may have dropped asleep, and so lost them."

"Yes, and dreamt all this gibberish, but she need not believe in it, waking. I'll tell thee what, mother,—I believe a husband would put all this nonsense out of her head sooner than anything else; so I shall cast about for one."

"Oh! she is too young for marriage yet,

father, or else there need be no casting about, for I've one in my eye."

"Who?"

"Raoul Cerisier."

"Well; he would do as well as any one else."

"Yes, and he has a kindness for her; and though she cares nought for him, yet, if I encourage him a little, he'll come forward, and, at least, put these dreams out of her head."

"Do so, then, mother, by all means."

"I will, father. Where are those idle boys, who are keeping us up? Oh, here they come! Don't let us make any remark: young people should not be made of too much importance."

So the young men were allowed to go to bed unhidden; and their father and mother barred and bolted the door, the one saying *Benedicite* and the other *Domine*--like parson and clerk.

" May I talk this morning, mother?" said Joan humbly, the next day.

" Yes, if thou use thy tongue discreetly," replied Zabillet, to Joan's immense relief, for she neither liked silence nor being in disgrace.

" Pierre will keep the sheep to-day," continued Zabillet; " so take this bundle of foul linen and wash it in the river. Hammer it well, and mind it gets a good rinsing."

This was part of Joan's regular work, and on the present occasion Zabillet the more gladly availed herself of it, because she thought the group of clattering women who were sure to be engaged in like manner at the water-side would do more to divert Joan's thoughts than could be effected by her usual solitary employment. It is true, that Zabillet was not usually fond of her hearing the village gossip, but it struck her in her present anxiety that in shunning one evil she might have fostered another;

and that it was even better for a young girl to hear a certain amount of idle talk, than to be left hour after hour to uninterrupted communings with her own heart and fancy—in which she may have been right. It is doubtful, however, how much a highly imaginative character may gain of what is original, and vast, and high, that would never, but in seclusion and quiet, have struck root downward and borne fruit upward.

Joan then let her mother set the bundle on her head, and, with bare feet, and a little wooden bat in her hand, took her way to the banks of the Meuse. Here a cluster of women were washing, while others looked on and talked—the skirts of the former being pinned up nearly to their knees, displaying beautiful, uncompressed feet, “with toes as level, even, and fair, as ladies’ fingers.”

No fewer than three of these women were

Joan's godmothers—she being very liberally provided in that respect, though there is no proof she ever was any the better for them, except for their good-will and prayers. And truly it seems to me that those who take on them that holy office, owe at least that much to their godchildren, somewhat more than in common is thought.

Beatrice Estellin, a woman of fifty, who was one of these sponsors, was seated with more ease than dignity on a reversed clothes-basket, and holding forth to her companions in the following manner, only noticing her godchild by a familiar nod.

“Why should she call her child Ismerie, say you, Tiffanie? Why, because she had been cured at the shrine of the saint of that name, whose legend you of course are acquainted with.”

“Oh, tell it us again, godmother, if you

please!" said Joan, eagerly. "It will refresh Tiffanie's memory, and you know how fond I am of it."

"Well," began Beatrice, "there was once a grand lady called the Dame d'Eppe, whose three brave sons went to the Holy Land. They were taken captive by the Soldan of Egypt, who desired to pervert them to heathenism. Being little of an arguer himself, he set upon them all the doctors and learned men he had about him, who did not make the least impression. They were cast into deeper captivity than ever, and the Soldan, at his wit's end, was considering what he should do with them, when it suddenly occurred to him that his only daughter, the Princess Ismerie, a young lady of extraordinary beauty, spoke excellent French, and was also a profound theologian.

"He therefore desired her to array herself

in her richest attire, and go instantly to these three young knights, and convert them out of hand. The knights were no little astonished, as you may suppose, to see a young lady of unparalleled beauty enter their dungeon, dressed in gold, silver, and all manner of precious stones. It so happened that when she came in, the eldest of the three brothers was engaged in carving a small figure of our Blessed Lady.

“ Well, the princess entered at once into the controversy, and got so much the worst of it, that she was mute for want of something to say: so then it occurred to her to ask the Chevalier d'Eppe what he was doing. In reply he gave her a complete outline of the Christian faith, which so amazed her and addressed itself to her better feelings, that she was effectually converted.

“ During the night, the little image which

the young knight had failed to make anything of was supplied, no doubt from some heavenly quarter, by that beautiful little statue of our Lady which is to be seen to this day at Liesse, and which, to be more attractive to the Soldan's daughter, was perfectly black."

"Was Ismerie black, then?" inquired Manette.

"No question of it," said Tiffanie; "and so was Pharaoh's daughter."

"Only *dark*, perhaps," said Manette.

"You will not be surprised," continued Beatrice, "to hear that Princess Ismerie was so charmed with this image, that she was the more easily induced by the knights to forswear her own wicked religion and escape with them to a Christian land. At dead of night, therefore, with all her jewels in her pocket, she stole softly down stairs, unlocked the dungeon, and fled with the knights to the banks of the

Nile, where they found a vessel which immediately brought them to France. The Dame of Eppe welcomed her brave sons and their deliverer with transport. The Princess Ismerie was baptized, and a beautiful church was built by the pious knights for the reception of the miraculous image, whose virtues in healing all manner of sickness have never ceased."

"Certainly, Perrette can testify to that," said Suzanne; "she went barefoot to the shrine, and her lameness was completely cured."

"Well, now, I should say the cure was incomplete, after all," said Tiffanie, "for she limps sadly."

"I am ashamed of you, Tiffanie," said Beatrice. "You should not let these young girls hear such heresy."

"Well, but does not she?"

"If she does, it must be from want of faith.

She was healed effectually enough at Liesse. We should all beware of relapsing into unbelief. Is not the good Duke of Barr a patron of the shrine? and did not poor unhappy King Charles the Sixth make a pilgrimage to it? Our dear Dauphin, too, has made intercessions there, which doubtless will be heard."

"Yes, without a doubt," said Joan, in a low voice, for she believed in some strange, wild stories; but she had the root of the matter in her for all that.

"Which of the three knights did the beautiful princess marry?" inquired Manette, with interest.

"Princess Ismerie did not marry any of them," replied Beatrice; "she took the veil."

"Ah! what a pity!"

"No pity at all, I think," said Joan. "It was a fit end to her holy life and brave deed, and doubtless she prayed for the con-

version of her father, whom she must have grieved to forsake. Why should marriage always wind up a story? If one has grace to do a good and great thing, surely one may then die in peace."

And she energetically set to her washing, without attending to any more gossip. She had already heard enough to set her dreaming of unfortunate knights being freed from their perils and distresses by brave damsels, and sped on their way by saints and angels.

When the family re-assembled in the evening, Pierre did nothing but grumble at the stupidity of keeping sheep all day.

"Why, what else are you fit for, you silly boy?" said Zabillet, rebukingly.

"A girl may keep sheep, as well or better than a boy," said Pierre, "and I don't so much mind keeping them along with Joan, because she tells me stories of the Dog of

Montargis and the Forest of Bondy, and Sir Enguerrand and the Lion, and the Sire de Fayel, who made his wife eat the troubadour's heart."

"Joan's head is lined with plenty of such trash as that," said his mother. "Where she picks it up, I know not, except of pedlars, and ballad-mongers, and tramps of one sort and another. It does neither of you any good, for it makes you discontented with the station into which you were born."

"Oh, mother! indeed I'm not discontented," interposed Joan, who was spinning; "I am as happy as I ever wish to be; and the only thing that grieves me is that the king and country at large should be in such trouble."

"We have nothing to do with the king and country at large," said Zabillet; "and nothing is more ridiculous than for young persons to meddle with matters too high for them. Put

aown some chestnuts to roast, Joan. Here comes Raoul Cerisier, and very likely he will stay to supper."

"Oh, mother! please don't ask him!" cried Joan.

"Not ask him, indeed! I shall ask who I please, without needing to ask consent of my children. Pray, what is your objection to my doing so?"

"He is such a very stupid, forward young man, mother—"

"Stupid? forward?—pooh, pooh! We must take people as we find them. We expect them to make allowances for us; and why should not we make allowances for them? You yourself require plenty of allowance to be made for you, Mistress Joan. Hist! here he comes."

Sure enough, Raoul came in, with a flower in his button-hole, a clean-washed face, a

riband round his hat, and a look that seemed to indicate the consciousness that his arrival was not altogether unexpected. Joan, to her disgust, saw her mother making much of him, and heard her tell him he was welcome, bid him be seated, hope he would stay, and ask him a variety of questions about his family, their employments and circumstances—how such a one made his farm answer, what such another got for his cow, how much another would give his son on his marriage, and what another would give with his daughter.

“A good daughter,” observed she, “is just so much property—you needn’t fidget, Joan, no one is thinking of you—a good daughter, as I was saying, who can wash, and bake, and spin, and sew, is just so much property; and when her parents give her away, it is exactly the same as giving away a bag of money. It

may be copper, or it may be brass, but still it's so much property."

Raoul grinned, and stroked his hair, and twirled his hat, and said something that sounded like "Oh ! is it, though ?"

"Yes, it is," said Zabillet, positively ; "and I, being the only married person present, am likely to know most about it. Here comes father, though. Raoul, my lad, you'll oblige me by sitting on this bench ; it's just as soft as the stool,—at least, no harder,—and Jacques always likes his own seat. Well, as I was saying, Raoul, I suppose you'll settle some of these days—"

"No, you weren't," said Raoul, "but it don't signify. Yes, I suppose I shall."

"Well, then, I wish you a good wife with all my heart," said Zabillet.

"Oh !" said Raoul, "I have not far to look. I have one in my eye."

"Oh, indeed!" said Zabillet, looking surprised. "And who may she be, I wonder?"

"Ah, she's one that can do all those things you said, and perhaps a lot more."

"Has she any money?"

"Well, that's what I should like to know," said Raoul, twirling his hat, "only I don't like to ask. Not much, I should suppose: but a little would be better than nothing."

"Certainly it would," said Zabillet, decisively. "Or if her parents are too poor to give her any money, perhaps they would give a cow or a calf, or a horse, or pig, or two or three sheep, or a few hens."

"You're more likely to know than I am," said Raoul, abruptly, "for you're her mother."

"You don't say so!" said Zabillet. "Oh, oh, oh!—capital!"

"Capital?" repeated Joan, with indignation, "anything but that, I think."

"We must talk it over, Raoul," said Zabillet, in great glee, "when we are by ourselves, and I dare say we shall be able to arrange it, with mutual concessions."

"Mother, how can you say so?" interrupted Joan. "Please don't."

"Child, be quiet: you are too young to come forward in these things. Bear with her, Raoul, she's but young and shy."

"Oh yes! I'll bear with her," said Raoul with a grin, which Joan thought made him look inexpressibly ugly.

"Raoul," said she to him in a low voice, but with a look of great determination, "'tis no good—I cannot bear you!"

## CHAPTER V.

FROM this time, poor Joan was so incessantly persecuted by Raoul's addresses, that they did indeed answer the end her mother had mainly in view, of chasing away her dreams and imaginations ; but the process was so repellent and disgusting to her, that the poor girl was ready to wish herself dead. As Raoul's character came out, Zabillet was indeed secretly forced to own to herself that he was not the man she would have chosen for her son-in-law, and that she should not vex much if he failed in his suit ; but as he answered her present purpose, she left to Joan the task of repelling him, and received him with smiles whenever he came.

Raoul's daily toil as a thresher kept him employed till sunset, but then he never failed to present himself; and if Jacques Darc did but welcome him with a doubtful grunt, the young men, whose lives were not too amusing, were well pleased Joan should have a lover, and indulged in many a jest at her expense: Pierre was her only ally, and thought it a shame to torment her. Raoul had so good an opinion of himself, that when he had once got over the awkwardness of speaking on the subject, he did so in good faith, believing it impossible he could be disagreeable to any one. Joan told him so, however, so unmistakably, that he stole a few minutes from his work one morning to see Zabillet alone, and ask her what he was to think of Joan's saying once and again she would not have him.

"Persevere, lad, persevere!" said Zabillet, with a mischievous gleam in her eye, for

which she ought to have been ashamed of herself; and Raoul, resolved to try a bold stroke for a wife, did not wait for sunset, but went off straight to the sheep pastures.

Joan was spinning on a mossy bank under a hawthorn on the skirt of an exhausted sandpit, while her dozen or so sheep, and two or three goats, fed on a patch of short, sweet grass before her. The trees were thin of leaves, but there was a ripe, autumnal feeling in the air, and the trees and bushes looked as if they had been touched up with a velvet brush, dipped in honey: the scene was rural and charming in the extreme, with occasional features of a bolder description in the distance. The lark was carolling high in air, and she herself was softly singing a hymn to the Virgin.

A sound of snapping twigs as Raoul pushed his way through some underwood made her look up.

"You here, at this time of day?" said she, in surprise.

"Aye," said he, throwing himself on the ground, a few paces from her; "I thought I would for once make holiday."

"It will be no holiday to me if you are coming to spend it here," said Joan. "I have no respect for people who forsake their work."

"Joan, how tart you are! I never came near a girl with such a bitter tongue."

"Why *do* you come near me then? I'm sure I do not want you; and more than that, if you are going to stay here, I shall go home and tell mother, for she has expressly told me, a hundred times, never to have anything to say to young men."

"Oh, well! but she did not mean me, for I am a great favourite—"

"Not of mine," said Joan, with asperity. "My father and mother would not send me

out here to keep the sheep if they thought any one would follow me; and, favourite or no favourite, my mother would be as angry as ever she could be, if she thought you were here now. So go your ways, Raoul, like an honest fellow, and mind your threshing."

"Joan, you are talking of what you know nothing about. I have seen your mother this very morning, and she knows that I am come here to bring you to the point."

"The point will be that I shall set the dog at you," said Joan, nettled. "Here, Hardigras!"

"Hardigras knows better than to fly at me," said Raoul, snapping his fingers at him, and whistling; which the dog, however, did not exactly incline to take in good part. "The long and short is, Joan, that you are promised to me, and my wife you shall be; so why make more ado?"

"Who promised me to you, I should like to know?" said she, in high scorn.

"That's neither here nor there. Promised you are; and you shall perform."

"Has my father ever promised? You know he has not!"

"I did not say he had."

"Has my mother? I don't believe it!"

"Perhaps she has, perhaps she hasn't. I've seen her since you have. You have promised me yourself, over and over again."

"Raoul! was there ever such a false word!"

"You have! I have said to you a hundred times, 'Will you marry me?' and 'When will you marry me?' and you've always named some time or other."

Here Joan called her dog, and began to collect her sheep.

"What are you going to do?" said Raoul, following her.

"Fold the sheep in broad day," said she, "if I cannot get quit of you in any other way. I will justify myself to my mother."

"Joan, if you dare me to it, I will have you up before the official at Toul!"

"Do so, and welcome!" said she. "Expose yourself to defeat and derision if you will! I will obey the citation."

"Ha! there's a wolf-cub!" cried Raoul, glad of an excuse to end a colloquy in which he gained no advantage; and he abruptly pushed through the brushwood, as if to scare it, though Joan had a strong persuasion that no wolf-cub was there. To her great relief, however, she heard his retreating footsteps.

Presently, Haumette, whose flock was nearer to her than she knew of, came up to her and found her crying.

"Oh! what is the matter?" said Haumette.

"Raoul Cerisier will be so tiresome," sobbed

Joan. "He persists in asking me to marry him."

"And have not you said no often enough?"

"Often enough? Why I mean never to say yes!"

"Why should not you say yes?" said Haumette. "On the whole, he is a very good fellow."

"A very good fellow would take no for an answer, and speak the truth instead of saying I had promised to marry him, which is the greatest falsehood that ever was."

"Ah, well! love leads folks into strange errors," said Haumette. "He must love you very much, or he would not importune you so."

"He says he will have me up to the official at Toul," said Joan. "I dare say it is only an idle threat; however, I almost hope he may; because then I shall speak right out, before witnesses, and so the matter will end."

"That will be a very unpleasant way of ending it," observed Haumette.

"Not at all," said Joan, taking up her distaff with a sigh. "I shan't mind it."

However small Raoul's hope could be that Joan would have him after such rough speaking on both sides, he resolved to plague her by executing his threat; and, accordingly, on the second morning from their meeting, a tawny-coated apparitor, or sumpnour, arrived and cited her to appear at Toul. Jacques Darc, who was just going to work when the sumpnour arrived, was highly indignant at this proceeding, which converted him from a luke-warm ally of Raoul's into his decided foe. He set Joan upon his horse, and walked beside her to Toul.

Raoul, who was standing at the entrance of the court-house, looked rather sheepish when he saw Darc accompanying his daughter,

though he could hardly have expected him to let her come alone. One or two acquaintances, who happened to be in the town, followed them in to watch the proceedings.

The official, who was a plain, sensible man, asked why the young girl was brought up before him. Raoul, with much effrontery, roundly declared she had promised to be his wife, and now refused to ratify her promise.

Joan, having with alacrity taken her oath, deponed that she never had made him any promise of the kind, and dared him to say where and when.

Raoul, after many prevarications, thought to turn the whole thing into a joke at her expense, and said abruptly—

“ Why, you said you would marry me when the sky should fall ; and, sure, the sky must have fallen in, since St. Michael and all angels have dropped out of it ! ”

Joan looked enraged ; but her father and the other bystanders burst into a fit of laughter ; and when the official had had the joke explained to him, he laughed too.

" Come, come, my pretty maid," said he, good-humouredly, " the young man has given you a Rowland for your Oliver. You expect him to believe that saints have come down from heaven, and he expects you to acknowledge that you promised him yourself in marriage. Set one against the other. We will think no more of either. You are cleared of the alleged promise ; and suppose we set things straight by your giving him your troth now."

But Joan would not hear of such a thing ; and the official seeing, by her look, how completely she was in earnest, dismissed them all ; advising Raoul to look out for a wife somewhere else.

" I know where he might find one," thought

Joan ; “ and if he ever gives me the opportunity, I will speak a friendly word for Hau-mette.”

The opportunity, however, was not given ; for Raoul, who considered himself an ill-used man, never spoke another word to her.

So Joan was left, during the ensuing winter, to the undisturbed workings of her inner being ; while, in the sight of all, she was spinning, sewing, looking after the stock, and performing all the humble duties of her little world in as unworldly a spirit as if she were out of it.

She found herself listening to voices, that came, she knew not how or from whence, without surprise or fear. They said, or seemed to say, that she must do and suffer great things ; they bade her go forth, fearing nothing that flesh could do unto her, for that she should be endued with strength for a certain allotted task by power from high. And when the

voices ceased, and the mysterious shadowings passed away, she used to weep, and beseech that she might be borne away with them, and prostrate herself to kiss the ground they had hallowed.

The Ettrick Shepherd has left us some account of the hardness of a shepherd's life in winter; sometimes literally giving his life for the sheep. And Valentine Duval has given us a picture of a shepherd's winter in Champagne. In Joan's time, Champagne was not accounted part of France. It was the debateable border-land, and thus a safe-conduct was necessary for a traveller in either direction. During this winter of 1428, jongleurs, pilgrims, pedlars, would sometimes stray through Domremy, and bring word how Orleans was being encompassed by strong forts, called bastilles. And they told how the Earl of Salisbury, reconnoitring the city from the top of the bastille

over against the bridge called Les Tournelles, had met his death from a cannon-ball, and had been succeeded in the command by Lord Suffolk, who was endeavouring to reduce the city by famine. Joan gathered up every disjointed scrap of intelligence from these chance sources, and went dreamily about, revolving them in her mind.

Meanwhile, she had as many little rubs and roughnesses in her daily life as heretofore, but she was too much pre-occupied to take account of them. At length, one day, she went and stood by her father, and presently said,—

“Father, I must go to Chinon.”

“And why, Joan?” said he, startled.

“To speak to the Dauphin.”

“Thou art surely mad!” said he, looking at her fixedly.

“Oh no, dear father, I am not! The voices tell me so. They bid me go.”

"They? who?"

"The voices."

"Bless my heart and soul!" said Jacques Darc.

"You know, father, Orleans is now closer besieged than ever. It is the last struggle for the kingdom that can be made. If it falls, the English will sweep over the land, as the Loire does when it bursts its dykes. The Dauphin will be driven for shelter to the mountains. Yes! If Orleans falls, we are lost!"

"Bless my heart alive!" ejaculated her father.

"As long as food can be got within the walls," continued Joan, dreamily, "they may hold out; but the English are closing them in all round. Tower after tower, wall within wall, are hemming them in, and when the circle closes they *must* perish!"

Her voice dropped, but every syllable was articulately whispered.

"Joan!" said Darc, roughly, "rouse yourself! You're dreaming! You're not yourself! Don't go on talking in this uncomfortable manner!"

She passed her hand over her brow, and said quietly, with a little sigh,—

"What is the matter?"

"A great deal is the matter, I think," said Darc. "You were talking—goodness knows what nonsense—about shapes, and voices, and such like."

"Ah yes, dear father! the voices say I must go."

"Whither, Joan?"

"To the Dauphin."

"My poor girl, thy wits are wool-gathering. The Dauphin, quotha! Forsooth and forsooth, ye are bent on mere folly."

"Will you let me go, father?"

"In a word—no!"

Joan's eyes filled with tears, but she said no more. Thenceforth she drooped, scarcely ate, and sometimes shed tears; but without any complaining.

One fine frosty morning in January, a middle-aged peasant, looking very brisk and cheerful, drove up to the house in a country cart, and scrambled out.

"Durand, is't thee, man?" cried Zabillet, dropping the carrot she was scraping, and throwing her arm about his neck.

"Aye, aye, Zabillet, 'tis I," replied he, kissing her very heartily; "and what will you say when you hear that Marguerite is in bed, with a fine healthy little girl?"

"Say? why, that I am very glad indeed of it, brother!"

"I've come over to know whether you could manage to spare Jeannette to us for a few weeks, till my wife gets about again."

"With all my heart," said Zabillet; "and, in fact, I think it will do the girl good, for she has not been quite well lately."

So, after a good deal of chattering and bustle, Joan was started off beside her uncle, jolting along the road to Petit Burey, in a cart that was used, for the most part, to fetch home calves and hay, or carry twenty or thirty bushels of apples and pears to market. She did not even wish Haumette good-bye, but she nodded, in passing, to Margette, and called out to her.

## CHAPTER VI.

"UNCLE," said Joan one evening, when she had been with Durand Laxart and his wife about six weeks, and they were all sitting round the fire, the mother with her sleeping babe in her arms, "What is the name of the governor of Vaucouleurs?"

"Sir Robert de Baudricourt," replied he; "a right brave and noble gentleman."

"I want to see him, uncle."

"You, child?" said they both.

"Uncle, do you believe in dreams and apparitions?"

"Certainly I do," replied he, with simplicity and solemnity. "My first wife appeared to me soon after her death."

"If I were to say to you, uncle, 'that could not be,' what should you reply?"

"My dear child, I should merely reply that you knew nothing at all about it. I know what I know. That you have not seen a thing I have seen, is nothing whatever to the purpose."

"That's exactly it!" exclaimed Joan, joyfully. "My dear uncle, I have had a dream—no, not a dream, but a vision, an impression, a manifestation—I do not know what to call it; however, some of the saints from heaven have manifestly appeared to me, and have given me a mission and a message. That mission, uncle, I must execute; that message I must deliver."

"My dear child, you don't say so?" said he, looking at her perplexed, and with a certain degree of pleasing awe; but with no incredulity whatever. "How have they appeared to you,

and what have they said? Has it been in this very house? This is deeply interesting."

Joan simply and earnestly told her tale; and Durand Laxart and his wife believed every word of it.

"Dear heart," said he, after a thoughtful pause: "and have you communicated this to your father and mother?"

"Yes, uncle. And they believe it no more than they would believe your seeing my aunt."

"As for that," said Durand Laxart, after another pause, "they might believe it or not; but I am as sure of it myself as that I see you sitting there."

"And I am equally sure that I saw the *letiche* of our poor little unbaptized baby," put in Marguerite, who was a very credulous, simple sort of good creature. "Besides, there was that young man thou knowest of, Durand,

who died for love of my sister Jacqueline—  
thou knowest what she saw.”

“ As for dying of love, I always thought he died of drinking,” observed Laxart; “ but he might do that, and yet not lie easy in his grave. Be that how it may, I am certain I had a visitation from Annette.”

“ And I am equally certain, uncle, that the blessed saints spoke to me as I have told you, and bade me go forward without fear. So, to-morrow I must see the Sire de Baudricourt.”

“ Stop a bit,” said Laxart, “ I can improve upon that. The Sire de Baudricourt is what I might call a showy man: a man to put a young girl like you out of countenance. So I will go to him myself.”

“ Oh, yes! that will be best,” said Marguerite.

“ You are very kind, uncle,” said Joan, “ but

I do not feel at all afraid of him, and I think it would be better for me to go. However, it shall be as you both wish."

So, next morning, good Laxart presented himself at the governor's door, and requested to have speech of him. After some demur, he was admitted.

Robert de Baudricourt was a man about fifty, who, like most nobles of his time, had seen some service. Though at present peacefully occupied, his garb partook of the profession of arms—that is to say, he wore a quilted red silk doublet, called a gambeson, with sword and dagger in his belt. His head was covered with a hood cut into a peak behind, beneath the shade of which appeared a bronzed, rugged countenance, with keen grey eyes and shaggy eyebrows. His large buff leather gloves lay on the table beside him, while he was doing something to his hawk's jesses.

“Well, old man,” said he, rather contemptuously, “what hast thou to say?”

“Great sir,” replied Laxart, with a profound obeisance, “I know well that your lordship is most zealously affected to our sovereign lord the king.”

“Whether you know it or not, is of very little importance, I think,” said De Baudricourt, still at his employment.

“The troubles of the times,” pursued Durand, “call for a remedy. Heaven has undertaken his Majesty’s cause, and spoken by the mouth of blessed saints to a young girl of humble origin.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” said the governor, looking up at him in amaze.

“My lord, it is even as I say. St. Michael and other saints have revealed to a young girl of Domremy the means of saving France.”

"And what may those means be?"

"She will herself reveal them, your lordship concurring, to his grace the King—the Dauphin, I should say."

"His Majesty Charles the Seventh proclaimed himself King of France immediately on his accession. You do him slight, therefore, in calling him Dauphin."

"Your pardon, gracious sir. Will it please you, then, to grant a safe-conduct to my niece to his sacred presence?"

"A safe-conduct? certainly not. What will you ask next, I wonder?"

"The saints, my lord, having appeared—"

"Saints? nonsense! Box the girl's ears well, and send her back to her parents. Philippe, you may show this old man out."

So poor Laxart found himself in the open air in less than no time.

Joan was anxiously awaiting him, at his

cottage door, though the cold, wintry wind cut like a knife.

“ Well? ” cried she, eagerly, and running up to him, as soon as he appeared.

“ Oh, my dear, it won’t do, it won’t do,—he won’t hear of it! ”

“ What did he say? ” inquired Joan, in great disappointment. “ Tell me everything that passed. How cold you are, dear uncle! You have taken a chill,—let me rub your hands. I will warm you a little wine.”

“ No, no, thank you,” said Laxart; “ and yet, after all, I think I will say yes. Oh, my dear! he is quite the man of consequence,—scarce looked up from his hawk’s jesses all the while I was there,—scarcely heard me out,—sneered me to scorn,—gave me a flat denial, and sent me packing.”

“ I am sorry, indeed, I should have exposed you to such usage,” said Joan, sym-

pathisingly ; “ you know, uncle, I wanted to go myself.”

“ My dear, it would have never done, it would have never done; there are some things that old folks can do better than young ones.”

“ Yes, uncle, and there are some things that young folks can do better than old ones. It is not seemly that you should be jeered and brow-beaten ; but I have made up my mind to all that,—I look upon it as part of my regular wages,—as a set-off against the honour and glory of delivering France. What ! shall I bear a message from the saints of heaven to my earthly sovereign, and care for the contumely of one of his meanest officers ? I am willing to bear the scorn both of the governor and of the whole court, if so be I can but win my way to the king’s ear at last ! ”

She spoke so intrepidly and with such un-

affected earnestness, that Laxart beheld and listened to her with reverence.

“Child,” said he, “such as you are born to do great things. I could no more speak and look like you than I could fly like an eagle. If so be, and it so being, that you must speak to the king, you have no more to do than to speak and look at the governor just as you do to me, to turn him round your finger.”

“That is just what I hope and think, uncle; therefore, to-morrow, if it please you, I will go to him myself; and meanwhile I will strengthen myself by much prayer.”

“A girl who gets to her knees as often as you do,” said her uncle, “cannot but prosper.”

Accordingly, they both set off for Vaucouleurs the next morning, and as they approached the town they could hear the bells ringing.

“Ah!” said Joan, joyfully, “what cheerful

sounds ! They seem to welcome me. I always so love the sound of bells ! ”

If the governor’s door-keeper had not been a friend of Laxart’s, it is likely he might not have admitted them. As it was, however, their names were carried in to De Baudricourt, just as he was deplored the king’s condition to a noble gentleman named Bertrand de Poulengey, and lightly observing what a ridiculous visit he had received the previous day from a countryman who had come several miles to tell him of a girl who could save France.

“ As I live, here he is again,” exclaimed De Baudricourt, “ and with the girl in his hand. Let us hear what she has to say.”

“ By all means,” said De Poulengey ; and Laxart and his niece were shown in. Joan’s apparel was neat and clean, but extremely humble. She still wore the red petticoat, which was beginning to be rather threadbare,

and a coarse red hood and cape of her mother's covered her head and shoulders, because of the inclemency of the season. De Poulengey, resting both hands on the hilt of his sword, and sitting a little behind the governor, never once took his eyes off her.

" So ! " said De Baudricourt, looking fixedly at her, " you are the girl that is to save France. Step forward."

Joan did so ; and so did Laxart.

" Now then, let's hear all about it."

" My lord —," interposed Dürant.

" Silence, fellow," said De Baudricourt, imperatively ; " you had your say yesterday. Fall back a little ; if you speak again, without being spoken to, I shall desire you to withdraw."

Joan's colour heightened a little, but she remained calm and silent.

" Now, then," said De Baudricourt, fixing his eyes piercingly on her.

"Beau sire," said she, steadily, "I am a young girl of Domremy. I come to you in the name of the Lord, to tell you that the Dauphin is to take heart and hold out; for that by mid-Lent he shall certainly be delivered. The kingdom is not his, but the Lord's; and it is the Lord's pleasure that he should hold it for Him."

She crossed her arms on her bosom, and ceased.

"Soh!" said De Baudricourt, with a little snort, after a short silence. "That is your message, is it? Is there any more?"

"The Dauphin will surely be crowned; and I shall see him anointed at Rheims."

"Ho! pretty well, I think?" aside to De Poulengey, who replied neither by word, look, nor smile. Then turning again to Joan—"Who gave you this message?"

Her eyes sank a little, and she said, faltering,

“*Un vray prud’homme* — the archangel Michael.”

“Hum! that’s fine—any else?”

“There were two fair ladies with him.”

“Oh, indeed! What were these fair ladies like?”

“They were like—like fair ladies.”

“Ha! just so. They stood upon the ground, I suppose, like other fair ladies; or were they up in the clouds? Did they frighten you?”

“Do you mean the first time?”

“Aye.”

“J’ aie eu moult paour de ce—.”

“Ha! So I should think. Did you tell the priest?”

“No.”

“Nor your parents?”

“Yes.”

“What did they say of it?”

“They held me in great subjection.”

"Ho! I think they showed their sense.  
What is your employment?"

"I keep sheep."  
"And in the winter, when the sheep are  
penned?"

"I spin."  
"How old are you?"  
"Eighteen."

"Speak up. Look me in the face."  
She did.

"You think yourself a modest girl—"  
"Sir, will you not let me help the king?"  
As these simple words burst from her lips,  
De Poulengy gave a great sigh, and shifted  
his position. Though he continued to look  
intently at her, the expression of his face  
entirely changed. Instead of merely betokening  
curiosity and watchfulness, it bespoke  
sympathy, respect, and affection. It was quite  
otherwise with De Baudricourt, however.

"I think," said he, throwing himself back in his chair, "this is as arrant a piece of nonsense as ever I heard. You have been dreaming over your sheep and your spinning. It bears much less the impress of a saint than of the devil. Why did not you tell your *cure* of it at the time? Go, go; you are an idle girl, if not a bad one."

"Beau sire—" began Joan.

"Silence, I say! I will hear no more nonsense. Leave me."

Durand took her reluctant hand, and led her away, dreadfully alarmed at the governor's displeasure.

"Oh, Joan, Joan!" said he, as soon as they were in the street, "did not I tell you it would never do? See how terrible is a great man's frown!"

"Be at ease, uncle," said Joan, calmly, "his frown cannot hurt us. Rough words

break no' bones ; and though he may seem a great man to us, may be he is a very little one in the eyes of the king. I am no ways discomfited, and fear him less now I have seen him than I did before. I shall go to him again to-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Aye, and day by day, till I gain my will of him."

"Child, child ! this is mere madness ; how am I to come here with thee day after day ?"

"That must not be," said Joan ; "and yet—"

She looked so discomfited that her pitying uncle said, "If, indeed, there really were need of thy remaining in Vaucouleurs—"

"Oh, indeed there is need of it!"

"Why, then, there is the wife of a worthy charcoal seller, who, at a word from me, would give thee a lodging."

"Oh, speak the word, then, uncle!" So to the charcoal seller they went.

Meanwhile, De Poulengey and De Baudricourt were comparing impressions.

"My conviction is," said De Poulengey, "that she is good and true. Never saw I maid more unblenching."

"Tut, tut!" said De Baudricourt, "she faced it well out; but yet her eye quailed a little, for a moment, before mine. She thought I should not swallow St. Michael."

"It may be delusion," said De Poulengey, musing; "but, on my life, there is no deceit in it."

"Then there is the finger of the devil."

"Would not *he* rather take the other side, think you?"

"Well, there's some sense in that." And De Baudricourt laughed.

"I suppose you believe in the saints?" said De Poulengey, gravely.

"Certes; but not in their appearing to shepherdesses."

"Not without high cause. But here *is* high cause."

"You believe in the girl then, De Poulengey?"

"On my faith, I do! That is, I believe unequivocally in her honesty; and I see no reason to doubt her mission."

"Well—" and the governor shrugged his shoulders.

"If I were you," persisted De Poulengey, "I should let the king hear of it."

"Who? I? No—I cannot do that."

"Wherefore should you not? Even as an instrument to be turned to good account?"

"Hum! I did not think of it in that light. Certainly others may believe in her, though I do not."

"Mark you, *I do*; therefore I am suggesting quite an unworthy motive—"

"Marry, it is quite worthy of its subject," said De Baudricourt. "The king would only laugh at me; and I have no mind to be laughed at."

"No need to be. You need only advise his Majesty that a maid of Domremy alleges having had a miraculous vision, and so forth, without committing yourself."

"Well," said De Baudricourt, after thinking it over a little, "I am really more inclined to suppose the matter to come from the powers of darkness than of light. There can be no harm, I think, in having the girl exorcised by the curate."

"None whatever. Then, if there be an evil spirit in her, it will be cast out."

De Baudricourt summoned a servant to him, and then said—

"Inquire where that young girl lodges."

## CHAPTER VII.

BERTRAND DE POULENGEY was as true a son of chivalry as ever drew sword; without fear, and without reproach. He was one of the royal equerries,\* and of noble birth. At this time he seems to have been off duty. Whether he had already done his sovereign good service in the field, as is highly probable, or had chiefly attended at joust and tournament, we know not. Certain it is that he had the true spirit of a knight-errant, whose sworn duty it was to defend the

\* “Nobilis vir, dominus Bertrandus de Poulangeyo, scutifer scutiferæ regis Franciæ:” i.e., *escuyer de l'escuirie du roi de France*, or equerry of the king's stable. Such is the rendering kindly supplied me by the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries.

orphan, the widow, the maiden, the poor, the defenceless, and the oppressed: to destroy tyranny, and to ensure safe travelling. In undertaking Joan's cause, therefore, De Poulengey was fulfilling his devoir under more than one of these heads. For the rest, he was a calm, serious, dignified-looking man, and his age was thirty-six.

On leaving Sir Robert de Baudricourt, De Poulengey went straight to his intimate friend and companion, Jean de Novelompont, commonly called the Sire de Metz. This gentleman, like himself, was a noble, but apparently had not received knighthood.\* There were many noble gentlemen of small landed estate,

\* "The term 'sire' has nothing to do with knighthood, either affirmatively or negatively. It differs from 'seigneur' only in being frequently applied to military commanders, whether landed or landless." I am indebted for this to my uncle, Mr. Serjeant Manning.

who remained esquires, simply to avoid the expenses of knighthood ; and they lost nothing of real power or position by this, for they were entitled to lead their followers into action under a *penoncelle*, as the knight led his under a pennon, and the knight-banneret under a banner. These independent squires wore silver spurs, while those of knights were silver gilt.

The Sire de Metz was just now leading the life of a retired country gentleman, rather chafing at his inaction, and amusing his leisure with—

“the mystere  
Of wood, and of rivere,  
An’ tugging of the harpe  
With his nailes sharpe;”

—by the mystery of the river being understood, not fishing, but hawking for water-fowl. He also tried his hand at a *lai* or *sirvente*, now and then, though his gift in this way was small ; and

he was very fond of chess. He was accustomed to be a good deal under the influence of De Poulengey, the more so for being three or four years his junior, and cast pretty much upon him for society. To him went De Poulengey, and related the curious scene he had witnessed at the governor's ; adding his conviction that the maiden was worthy to be believed, and observing that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord had sometimes ordained praise. De Metz heard him with wonder ; and when De Poulengey wound up with, " What should you say if I told you I held it a good and wise thing to see this girl safe on her journey ? " he burst out laughing, and said, " By my faith, I should think you either foolish or mad, and I have never been accustomed to consider you either."

De Poulengey argued that since he had appeared to him neither mad nor foolish hereto-

fore, it was possible he might not be so now; and talked the matter over with him, dispassionately, and yet forcibly, which was his usual manner.

Meanwhile, Laxart, having procured a lodging for his niece with his old acquaintance, Catherine le Royer, the charcoal seller, took leave of her, and departed. Catherine le Royer, who was a respectable married woman, of about thirty years of age, put a few questions to Joan,—who was quiet, and sparing of her words,—and then returned to her own affairs. Joan spent much of her time in prayer, and filled up the rest of it in spinning for her hostess.

On the following day, she was preparing to repeat her visit to Sir Robert de Baudricourt, when Catherine, standing at her door, exclaimed,—

“ Maiden, here comes Sire Jean, our curate,

in his stole, and with him the governor, and sundry other persons, and they are making straight for this house."

"If the governor comes to me, it will save my going to him," said Joan, composedly.

As she spoke, De Baudricourt entered, accompanied by the curate, De Poulengey, and De Metz, while a little knot of curious bystanders remained outside. Catherine looked somewhat alarmed, but Joan displayed simple surprise.

"That is the girl," said Sir Robert, abruptly, to the curate, without addressing a word to either of the women, and scarcely looking at them. "Exorcise her at once, and let us see what comes of it."

The curate, who was rather young and good-tempered looking, proceeded to adjure any evil spirit that might be in her to come out of her,

and any good spirit that might be in her to remain where he was.\*

All this Joan submitted to very calmly; after which she told the governor she hoped he had satisfied himself that she was not in league with the powers of darkness.

"All the better for you if you are not," replied he. "Take heed to give no colour to such a supposition by your future conduct." Saying which he turned on his heel, and was followed by all but the Sire de Poulengey.

"What did it all mean?" said Catherine, looking bewildered.

"Oh!" said Joan, smiling, "do you not know there is an old prophecy that a maid between Colombey and Vaucouleurs shall save France? I am that maid."

\* "Quod ipse presbyter apportaverat stolam, et coram dicto capitaneo eam abjuraverat, dicendo sic quod si esset mala res, quod recederet ab eis, et si bona, veniret juxta ipsos."—*Procès* ii. 446.

Catherine looked petrified, for she had heard the prophecy formerly, but had not connected it with Joan. De Poulengy now broke silence.

“Maiden,” said he, “you have well borne the test. Do not fear the roughness of the governor: it is his duty to be wary, and send the Dauphin no impostor. However, I think, you will win to him yet; and, as the dangers by the road will be great, I offer myself to you in all true fealty as your champion, to see you safe to the Dauphin,” saying which, he kissed the hilt of his sword. “Do you accept me?”

“Most certainly I do,” said Joan, colouring with pleasure, “and I thank Heaven for having given me so honourable a conductor. Ah! surely all must go well, since assistance is thus vouchsafed me!”

De Poulengy addressed a few more words to her; but finding her shy and tongue-tied,

courteously bent his head and relieved her of his presence, thinking her the simplest shepherdess in the world, and inly smiling to see how little she troubled herself as to who was to bear the expenses of travelling, or feared to trust herself with one of whom she absolutely knew nothing.

Meanwhile, the curate who had lately exorcised her, saw her quietly come into church with her hostess, and perform her devotions with the utmost appearance of seriousness and piety; and was thereby impressed in her favour.

On returning to her lodging, Joan met the Sire de Metz, who had not yet spoken to her, but who did so now as if they were on the best of terms. He had been conferring with De Poulengy about her, and was curious to hear what she had to say for herself.

“*Ma mie,*” said he, cheerfully, “what is this you are doing here? Must we not submit to

see the king expelled from his kingdom, and ourselves becoming English?"

"Sir," said she, very seriously, "I am come to ask the Sire de Baudricourt to send me to the Dauphin. He has no care for me, nor for any words of mine, but yet it is needful that before mid-Lent I should stand in the Dauphin's presence, even should I in reaching him wear through my feet and have to crawl upon my knees. For no one upon this earth, neither king, nor duke, nor daughter of the king of Scots,\* no one but myself is appointed to recover this realm of France. Yet I would willingly remain to spin by my poor mother, for war seems no work for me. But go I must, because my Master wills it."

"Whom call you your master?" then said De Metz.

\* There was talk at this time of betrothing the infant son of Charles VII. to the daughter of the king of Scots.

"The King of Heaven," replied she, reverently. "He it is who has sent me."

"Well," said De Metz, holding out his hand to her; "I believe you say true, and I promise you on the faith of a gentleman, and in the hearing of God, that I will lead you myself before the king. When do you wish to begin your journey?"

"Sooner now than to-morrow, and sooner to-morrow than later,"\* replied she.

"There are several things to be thought of first," rejoined De Metz. "Do you mean to go in the clothes you have on? You must ride astride a horse for about four hundred miles, and those short red petticoats of yours are scarcely suitable."

"The voices," replied she, "have told me to wear the garb of a man."

\* "Citius nunc quam cras, et cras quam post."—*Deposition of De Metz.*

"Oh, indeed!" said De Metz, with a sudden movement of his eyebrows, for this was his first introduction to the voices, and he did not precisely know what to think of them. "And have you any clothes of that sort to wear?"

"No," said Joan, faltering; for she could not think of any one but her uncle likely to lend them her; and a sudden, quick blush, as bright as it was unexpected, arose in her face as it occurred to her how absurd she would look in a suit of Laxart's.

"Never mind," said De Metz, kindly. "I think my page Julian is about your size, and he shall find a suit for you. Damsels have gone on adventures disguised as pages before now, if books of chivalry lie not."

He then bade her farewell, saying, "Be of good courage; we will soon set forth."

Joan's enterprise was now the talk of the

whole town ; and the inhabitants would have thought themselves very badly used if it had come to nothing. More than a fortnight passed, during which scarcely a day elapsed without her meeting De Poulengy or De Metz in the street, and having a little conversation with them, which led to no conclusion except that of confirming them in the mind that she was as honest, good a girl as ever was. Everything she did and said was in the full light of day, and full sight and hearing of the town, which was always agape to watch her ; and many, it may be, went daily to church, for no better reason than that she did. She was continually at the door of the governor, who began to hate her name ; though there is reason to think he had already written privately of her to the king at Chinon ; else, why should a king's messenger and archer soon make their appearance ? This I do not insist

on, I think it was so, but you may think as you like.

One day Joan was proceeding, rather depressed, to the governor's, attended, as usual, by a body-guard of small boys, who fell back, and tumbled over one another if she happened to look round, when, on asking to see him, she was immediately admitted.

"Well," said he, with some severity, but without any disdain, "what have you to say?"

"I come to remind you, sir, that time passes, and the country must needs be saved."

"Why don't you save it, then?"

"Will you give me a safe-conduct to the Dauphin?"

"Most certainly not. But hark you, Joan! His grace the Duke of Lorraine desires to see you, and has sent you a safe-conduct."

"Why should he desire to see me?" said Joan, in surprise.

" You can ask him," said the governor, drily.  
" I am going to ride over with you ; are you ready ? "

• " I would willingly go back to my lodging first, sir."

" Very well ; then be ready in half an hour."

He turned away from her, and De Metz, who was present, came forward and whispered kindly—

" Be in no fear ; De Poulengy and I shall attend you, and you will find what you want at your lodging."

She did not understand him, but hastened back in some trouble, to tell Catherine what she was about to do. While they were speaking, a handsome youth of sixteen entered, carrying a bundle, which he set down, saying, " This is for you, damsel," and then departed, after giving her a sidelong look of intense

curiosity, as if he were seeing a giant or dwarf without paying the penny.

Joan darted at the bundle, guessing what it was, and hastily opening it, found it contained, a sad-coloured doublet and hose, with boots and spurs, none of them new. Catherine was turning them over in rather a depreciating spirit; and wondering how Joan could bear to see herself in them, when Joan reminded her there was no time to lose, and hastily took them into the inner room, and began to put them on, rolling her hair up into a great knot behind. She had hardly time to think how queer the things felt, when Catherine, in excitement, cried, "Here they come for you," and Joan, catching the riding-cloak round her, and pulling the hood a good way over her face, sallied out into the broad day, overcome for the moment with shame. Jingling spurs, glistening plate armour, and curveting horses

swam in a mist before her eyes ; De Poulengey and De Metz were at her side, and one held the horse while the other set her on it. She righted herself in a moment, and was off, with one of them at each side, the governor, very grand, in front, and a cluster of men-at-arms behind. All the town were in the street ; her appearance and dress were eagerly criticised. It was vehemently declared that the clothes were not conformable to her deserts, and hung upon her like a barber's towel on his block. A subscription was immediately agreed upon to buy her a better suit ; and in less than a quarter of an hour the top tailor of Vaucouleurs was getting her measure of Catherine.

De Baudricourt had no mercy on the young girl, but proceeded to Toul at a hard trot ;\* hoping, perhaps, to shake her purpose out of

\* Barante says the duke lay sick at Nancy, but the *Procès* says Toul.

her, which had no more effect than a fit of seasickness on a boy determined to be a sailor. Before they were half a mile out of Vaucouleurs, Joan felt perfectly at ease, and she never afterwards felt otherwise, to the end of her short life. She asked De Poulengey if he thought the duke were going to send her to the Dauphin.

“No,” said he, “I believe he only sends for you because he hopes you may heal him of his sickness.”

“How can I do that?” said Joan, in wonder.

“Through the voices, I suppose,” said De Metz, drily.

“It is not their affair,” said Joan, with gravity; “and you must not take their names in vain.”

De Metz was checked, and gave a side glance at De Poulengey.

"We had better go back," said she; "this is folly."

"No, no!" said De Poulengy; "we must go forward, or the duke will take it amiss. How know we what he has to say?"

She continued her route, therefore, reluctantly.

"Shall I see the duchess?" said she, presently.

"The duchess does not at present live at home," said De Poulengy, with a little cough. "Her place is supplied at present by a lady named Allix de May."

Not another word from Joan.

On arriving at the palace, there was much to bewilder and overawe her in the stately array of squires, pages, and men-at-arms grouped about; but no sign of any lady. It occurred to Joan, however, that, very likely, all this splendour was but a poor shadow of that which

surrounded the king ; without any trepidation, therefore, she followed Sir Robert de Baudricourt, as he clanked and jingled along the corridors to the duke's bedroom. The duke was propped up with pillows, and looked ashy pale.

"Is this the girl?" said he, looking with some surprise at what he had at first taken for De Baudricourt's page. "Maiden, I am brought low by mortal sickness ; and if thou wilt heal me, ask what thou wilt and I will give it thee."

"Lord duke," replied she, "I grieve from my heart that I can only help you by my prayers. If I could heal you, I would gladly do so without any guerdon. I have no gift of healing, and am only a simple girl who has a message to the Dauphin."

"But surely," said he, anxiously, "the saints who have heard you in one matter will hear you in another?"

"My prayers," replied she, "you shall have, and I hope they may be heard; but that is all I can say. One thing alone I have been told, and am sure of,—that the siege of Orleans shall be raised, and the king crowned at Rheims."

"Since that is all," said he, in disappointment, "I will not detain you. Gaston, let the young woman be suitably compensated for her trouble in coming." On which Gaston put his hand into his tasselled pouch, and gave her four livres. "I shall rely," said the duke, "on your keeping your promise of praying for me.—You have, then, nothing else to say?"

"Only," said Joan, looking full at him, and lowering her voice, which, however, was as clear as a bell, "I wish you would have back your duchess, and put away Mistress Allix."

De Baudricourt was petrified, and so was Duke Charles, who really believed her to speak from immediate inspiration.

"You may go," said he, in a hollow voice, "you may all go, for I am too weak at present to speak any more." And away they all went.

On the whole, De Poulengey and De Metz were well pleased with this first proof of their charge. She evidently feared neither king nor kaiser while she had a message to deliver ; and as for her riding, it was something wonderful.

It was quite dark when she reached the door of honest Henri le Royer, the charcoal seller, who, smutty as he was, came out to receive her, looking much more like a dabbler in the black art than she did. Catherine followed her to hear the news, and assist her in changing her dress ; but Joan rolled up her old clothes in a bundle, and put them in a corner, saying, "I shall wear them no more till my mission is ended."

Durand Laxart came over, the next morning, full of misgivings and forebodings, strictly.

charged by his wife, if by any means it were possible, to induce Joan to return home. He had already, though somewhat tardily, sent word where she was and what she was about to her parents, who, he knew, were on their road to her, full of grief.

Joan no sooner saw him, than, forgetting how strange she must look to him in her strange dress, she hastened gladly to meet him.

“ Uncle !” cried she, “ all is going well !”

“ Oh, child !” exclaimed Laxart, dropping into a seat, “ you take my breath away ! What a garb for a modest young woman ! Put off, put off those things, for thine uncle is actually ashamed to look at thee !” (This was a figure or trope, for he was looking hard at her all the while.) “ You put me for all the world in mind of puss in boots ! Come back with me, come back to home and duty, and forget these strange, wild dreams.”

“ Dreams, uncle? why, the dreams are coming true! I should be a disobedient servant if I neglected my Master’s voice! Go back I cannot, until my errand is sped! Did you note the brave Sire de Poulengey as you came up the street? He and the Sire de Metz have sworn on the cross of their swords that they will conduct me in safety to the Dauphin, and protect me as if I were their own sister!”

“ Certainly that makes a great difference,” said Laxart, hesitatingly, “ though a wilder scheme——”

“ All that I want,” pursued Joan, rapidly, “ is a horse; for these noble gentlemen have not offered me one, nor will the governor——”

“ Truly I would not have you beholden to any of them for one,” said Durand; “ and since they have undertaken your safe conduct, which is the principal thing, and your apparel, though

a worse fit I never saw—so thoroughly unbecoming—it shall go hard with me if I supply not the horse.”

“I thank you, uncle, with all my heart; and here are four pieces of gold towards it which were given me yesterday by Duke Charles.”

“Duke Charles? why, how can that be, child? He is sick in bed at Toul.”

“Yes, uncle; but he sent for me, hoping I could heal his sickness; and when I told him I could not, he asked for my prayers.”

“Wonderful!” exclaimed Laxart. “All the grand people seem taking you up.”

“I wish the governor would, but he is deaf to all I can say.”

“No wonder; it requires great faith to believe in you. I can hardly think you are yourself, Joan, in that strange, unwomanly dress.”

“Uncle, the voices bade me wear it.”

"Did they? then, truly they were right, if go thou must, and it more inclines me to believe in them than anything thou hast yet told me. . . . Yes," said he, after a little thought, "of a surety the voices are in the right on't, whichever way we may look at it; for a poor, home-spun shepherdess in red weeds\* would needs get flouted at court; and for two young knights to be seen vagabondising about the country with a woman, might well bring discredit on all the three."

"Uncle! they are not young."

"Oh! are they not though?" said he, ironically. "If they are not, I don't know what young is. However, I shall go out and look after a horse. Here, take your four livres: if I borrow of any one, it will not be of you. And here come your father and mother!"

\* "Pauperibus vestibus rubeis."

## CHAPTER VIII.

DURAND LAXART, as he said this, walked off pretty fast in the opposite direction—for he did not feel equal to the scene he was sure would follow—while Jacques and Zabillet, like two respectable Champagnois peasants as they were, came trudging down the street in heavy sabots, but with heavier hearts.

“Let me speak to her first, mother,” said Jacques.

“No, let me speak to her first, father,” returned Zabillet. “Women know women best, and how to touch one another up in the tender part; whereas you men come down upon us, like as you might come down upon my bare feet with your heavy sabots.”

Saying this, she took a quick step or two in advance, and entered the charcoal seller's house first, but no sooner perceived Joan, whom at first she took for a stranger, than she uttered a little shriek, and stopped short, while Jacques stood in the doorway, transfixed.

"Joan! Joan!" said Zabillet, in a short, quick voice, and with kindling eyes, "take those things off, I say! Take them off!"

"Why, bless my heart and soul, is that you, Joan?" cried her father. "Why, I could not have believed my eyes! Why, what on earth are you about?"

"She's about breaking her father's and mother's hearts, that she is! the bad girl!" said Zabillet, bursting into a flood of tears. And the poor woman's grief—like a leaden pipe which has burst during the frost, but only begins to drip when the thaw comes, and

presently bursts into a downright stream—no sooner found an outlet for her tears than her eyes began to shed rivers of water.

“ Little did we think, Joan——” began her father.

“ Hush, father; permit me,” said Zabillet, through her sobs, “ Joan! Joan! thou wast always a duteous and obedient child till this matter overturned thy reason; and the end of it will be disgrace to us all.”

“ Oh, mother!”

“ Yes, miss, disgrace, and misery, and desolation. You are set up with high notions, and must consort with the great, I warrant you, and go to kings’ palaces, where they don’t want you, or they would send for you, and where, when you get there, they will spurn you like the very dust under foot.”

“ That is their own affair,” said Joan, with spirit, “ I have no concern with the reception

I may get. All I have to do is to say my message ; and if the Dauphin will not obey it, let him look to it ! he stands in his own light. Oh, my mother ! woe is me to act contrary to you, and right glad shall I be, when my errand is sped, to come home and submit myself to you."

" You'll *never* come back ! Oh, my Joan ! thy mother'll shed salt tears for thee, but thou 'lt never see them."

" Oh, mother ! oh, mother ! "

" Come along, then, come along like a good girl," said Jacques, in a quavering voice. " Put off those unnatural things and come along home with us, do ye now—there's the cart at the town-end, and old Dagobert getting a mouthful of hay—he's been very down-hearted, Joan, since you left us—and I'll drive you and mother back, and we'll all be at our own fireside, please God, before dark, and the

poor boys will be so happy !” Here his voice broke.

“ Ah !” said Zabillet, through her tears, “ if you could but hear Jacquemin among the corn-sheaves, bellowing like a calf !”

Though this may seem a forced image to the reader, it was a very affecting one to Joan, on whom it had devolved to wean the calves by teaching them to lap milk with her finger in their mouths, and she had often felt most lively pity for the poor cows deprived of their offspring.

“ Oh, my parents !” said she, weeping, “ only let me have my way this once !”

“ This once ! why, this once will shape all thy future life !” exclaimed Zabillet ; “ and cut it short, too. This once, indeed !”

“ Mother, do you believe in the saints ? I know you believe.”

“ Oh fie, fie ! don’t let us go off to the saints.

The saints love girls that are obedient to their parents, 'tis the first commandment with promise; and they that do not keep it will *not* live long in the land."

At this moment, Durand Laxart entered, saying,

"Niece, I have found you a horse——"

"And what should she do with a horse?" cried Jacques, turning on him fiercely; for in truth he was glad to find some one to be angry with. "Durand Laxart, little did I expect this ill turn of thee, to come canting to my house on pretence of wanting Joan to nurse thy wife, and then leading her into all this mischief!"

Durand looked confounded, and was going to reply, when Jacques continued with—

"And as to a horse, you might just as well have found her a cow or a pig, and just as well would she look upon it; for she has

no more notion how to sit a horse than a sack of rye or of barley. She never rode one but once, and that was when I set her upon old Dagobert like a bushel of apples, and had to walk at his head the whole way. 'Twas when thou wentest to Toul, hussy, thou well rememberest, for breach of promise of marriage."

"But I rode all the way there, yesterday, father," interposed Joan, "and held the reins all by myself. I was not a bit afraid, and the brave Sires De Poulengey and De Metz rode on either side of me, and Duke Charles spake me fair, and wanted my prayers, and gave me these four pieces of money—you may have them, mother, if you like."

"Well, to be sure," said Zabillet, wiping her poor, smarting eyes, as Joan dropped the money into her lap. "And pray what did he givc them to you for?"

“For my trouble in going to him.”

“And wherefore did you go?”

“Because he sent for me, with a safe conduct. And the governor himself took me, with ever so many men-at-arms.”

“Yes, yes,” said Durand, in a subdued voice, “the grand people have all taken her up, and it is the will of the Lord, and we must be mute since He has made her His mouth-piece.”

“Well, it’s all a mystery and perplexity to me,” said Zabillet. “Not that I would for an instant controvert the will of the Lord, if I knew it to be so. It all seems so extraordinary.”

“Extraordinary evils require extraordinary cures,” said Laxart; “and sometimes get them.”

“Whatever a live duke, a reigning potentate, could want to see in *your* round face—” pursued Zabillet, ruminating. “Disobedient girls must be at a premium. And what, now,

might his lordship's ducal grace say?" for curiosity was assuaging her sorrow a little.

"He said he was sick and like to die, and wanted to know if I could cure him."

"If he had sent to *me*, now," said Zabillet, "there would have been some sense in it, for there's a many things I know how to treat with what grows in the fields and hedges; but I thought it was one of the privileges of the rich to have a learned doctor whenever they liked, whether they were ill or only fanciful, without caring for the cost, even if their pills were wrapped in gold-leaf. And what, now, might be his complaint?"

"He did not tell me," said Joan.

"Overeating-and-drinking of his lordship's self, most likely," said Jacques, shortly. "That's what the rich mainly suffer from—Indigestion."

"Well," put in Laxart, addressing himself

to Joan, "'tis no good blinking the matter. I've a good way to go home, and a many things to do. I've got you a horse, and me and another have made up the price between us, for it was a matter of sixteen francs, so I hope you'll take care of it, and not break its knees."

"Oh, thank you, uncle!"

"What can she want—" Jacques was beginning.

"And while I was bargaining for it," persisted Laxart, doggedly, "that brave gentleman of yours came up, that has taken your matter in hand—not the dark but the light one—the Sire de Poulenger, don't you call him? and he, remembering to have seen me come out of this house, asked me what I was about, and whether it had any reference to you; and when he found what it was, he was well pleased, and cheapened the horse for me by pointing out a little white about the knees;

but he said it was a good, serviceable horse, and more than equal to your apparel, which was of the meanest; and that he had been asking the Sire de Metz how he could send you such a suit; but, it seems, he, the younger squire, had had light things said to him by the governor about going wallopping and trollopping all over the country with a young woman, which had hurted his feelings, and so he was determinated you should not be too smart."

"The things will do very well," said Joan, who was now blushing painfully at the words Durand had put into the governor's mouth—though they were entirely his own, and quite a free translation of what De Poulengey had said to him.

"And he went on," continued Durand, "to speak of this extraordinary project; and truly we may all thank Heaven that so discreet and virtuous a gentleman has taken the matter in

hand, for if he had been some young fellow whose character was not worth twopence, you would have been just as ready to go with him."

"I should not!" said Joan, indignantly, while Jacques inwardly thanked his brother-in-law for this hit.

"Well," pursued Laxart, "if you get creditably through it, it will be more owing to him, I think, than to yourself."

"Is he then so discreet a gentleman as you say?" inquired Zabillet, anxiously.

"Probity itself," replied Durand; "and the other, from all I hear, is just such another, though a trifle younger. Both are turned thirty."

"Dear me! thirty is no age at all," said Zabillet.

"I grant you," said Laxart, "it's the sense more than the age; but these gentlemen have sense and virtue too."

"There's some consolation in that," said Zabillet, who was weeping softly; while Joan, with her arm about her mother's neck, was shedding rivers of tears on her bosom, but without the least noise, or any swerving from her purpose.

"Go on, go on, brother," said Jacques, in a voice as weak as his wife's. "Give us all the consolation you can by telling us whatever good you know of these gentlemen without any romancing. I have not forgotten the dream I had, long years ago, that Joan was going along with soldiers, and I did say at the time, that, sooner than it should come to pass, I would drown her like a kitten; but now the time's come, I don't find it so easy."

And here, making an unfortunate attempt to laugh, he only gave a sob.

"You see," said Durand, soothingly, "that you did not know the whole meaning of the

dream, and thought she was going off with the soldiers in a disreputable sort of way, whereas the whole thing is quite respectable, and approved by all the town.”

Catherine here made a seasonable diversion by hospitably saying, “Dinner is now ready, gossip, and I hope you will partake of it, for you have come a long way, and must needs be hungry.”

“Well, I wondered what it was that made me so weak,” said Jacques, “and maybe that is the reason. So, as you are so pressing, gossip, I don’t care if I take a mouthful.”

“I’m not a bit hungry,” said Zabillet.

“Oh ! but you must join us,” said Catherine, “or I shall think there is something amiss in the fare or the invitation. Come, Joan ! come, Laxart !”

“There’s nothing amiss in the fare, I will undertake to say,” observed Zabillet ; “for

what's good enough for you must be good enough for us. I always say, what will do for me, ought to do for my guests."

"Yes, if they take you by surprise," said Catherine. "Otherwise, one would willingly provide a little better."

"I am sure there is no need in the present instance," said Zabillet. So they all drew about the table, on which stood a large bowl filled with steaming soup; and Catherine summoning in her husband, Henri le Royer, from the charcoal-shed, he came in, looking very black, but very good-tempered, with teeth as white as a chimney-sweep's. There were but two spoons, which were common to them all, and, at starting, there was a good deal of old-fashioned politeness, and "you first," "no, you first," but hunger soon asserted its dignity, and the spoons went briskly round with the precision of a military exercise. In those days

there was even a sentiment attached to eating out of the same plate and drinking from the same cup. I believe knights and their lady-loves were accustomed to do it; I am certain it was the rule for a man and his wife. And in the Tyrol, even now, peasants may be seen eating out of the same bowl with the same spoon.

Even Joan, who was a remarkably spare eater for so healthy-looking a girl, partook of the soup with relish, and could not help saying, “How glad the poor people in Orleans would be of this!”

“Oh, bother Orleans!” said her father, bluntly; on which she gave him a look of mild reproof, but said nothing, feeling the subject had better be left alone.

Catherine, filling a cup with wine, passed it round, saying, “This is of last year’s vintage; give me your opinion of it.” So then they all

tasted it, and gave their opinions ; and a good deal was said of this vintage, and other vintages, and vintages in general ; and then they got to the pear and apple crop, and then to cherries ; and Catherine fetched out an apron-full of apples, and handed them round, saying “ Eat one of these, it will settle your teeth,” and began to chew one herself, in a way to show that she, at any rate, had a good, firm set. They were attaining a kind of April cheerfulness, all the more so that Henri le Royer, having come in fresh, stuck to general subjects, when the little window of the room was suddenly darkened by several persons passing it, and, the next instant, there was an authoritative tap of the knuckles at the house-door.

“ Come in always,” cried Catherine.

So the latch was raised, and in walked a deputation of six reputable citizens of Vaucouleurs, to wit, the butcher, the baker, the

candlestick-maker, the armourer, the saddler, and the tailor ; who, to Catherine and Henri le Royer, were quite among the upper ten thousand.

All the dinner-party stood up, impressed with an awful sense that something uncommon was about to happen ; and the tailor, stepping forward towards Joan, to whom he bowed, with his feet in the first position, with much oratorical solemnity delivered himself thus,—

“ Virtuous damsel, the tradesmen-citizens of Vaucouleurs, conscious of your exalted worth and the lofty motives which inspire your present emprise, desire to present you with a suitable testimonial of their sentiments, in the shape of a doublet, hose, cape with a hood to it, and other appurtenances, which, being made of the very best materials,—by my unworthy self,—we hope will fit.”

To which Joan, receiving the parcel of

clothing from his hands, replied, with the utmost propriety,—

“ Mr. citizen tailor, and you, ye other citizens and respectable tradesmen of Vancouverurs, it gives me unfeigned satisfaction to receive this proof of your sympathy; and I hope, by the blessing of Heaven, to show that it has not been thrown away.”

After this exchange of formalities, a general hand-shaking and complimenting took place, which amazingly impressed all, but especially Zabillet.

“ Well,” said she, with elation, when the deputation had retired, “ I always said that mine has been a remarkable life—I have never known one day what would happen the next. Who would have thought, husband, that a child of ours should have received an honour like this from the chief citizens of a large market town ? ”

"Certainly it is a very uncommon proof of the interest they take in Joan," said Jacques, looking considerably pleased; "and I must say, the confidence they evidently repose in her makes me more inclined to confide in her myself."

"Oh, thank you, father!" said Joan.

"It may be," said he, tapping her on the cheek kindly, "that we old folks have been all wrong with our precautions and prudence, for this is a remarkable case; but, in cases in general, mind you, the precautions and prudence of old people are all in the right."

"Oh, yes; I am quite willing to admit that," said Joan.

"So are we all," echoed Catherine, Henri, and Laxart.

"Then, Joan, you baggage, why don't you go and put the things on," said her father, cheerfully, "that we may see how they look?"

"Ah, that is an excellent proposal," said they all ; and as Joan was burning to do that very thing, she made no objection, but carried the bundle into the other room, and shut the door.

Then the others drew round the fire, and said what an extraordinary thing the whole affair was, and what an extraordinary girl Joan must be, and all the more so for having previously given no signs of being anything but ordinary ; and how well she looked, even in the shabby suit, though it was best not to let the young baggage know it ; and how odd it was, her not being a bit afraid to trust herself with these gentlemen, and what guilelessness it showed, and how they hoped and prayed the gentlemen would be as good as they seemed, and lead her into no evil. And Jacques said, " Well, it is sorely against my will that she should go ; but, since she will, why, let us

ope the Dauphin will believe in her as much  
s his noble squires do ; and there's an end  
n't."

"No, there's not an end on't there," said  
laxart ; "because if she carries the Dauphin  
ight through, and gets him anointed at  
theims before the English prince is crowned  
t Paris, why, she saves her country, and will  
eturn covered with glory."

"I know not how it should be, brother,"  
aid Jacques, "but somehow I seem to care  
ess about saving my country than saving my  
aughter Joan!"

"Why, that's right and natural !" exclaimed  
oth the women.

"Only, if everybody did so with regard to  
heir sons and daughters," said Laxart, "what  
would become of the country ?"

"That's past my answering," said Jacques.  
"But, mother, what a time the girl is dressing

herself! Do remind her we cannot stay here all night!"

Zabillet went in to her; but presently returned, saying,—

"She has the clothes on already, but says she cannot come in, she is so much ashamed."

"Ashamed! I like that!" said Jacques with a snort, while Durand burst out laughing "Why, have not we seen the jade in her other suit already? As to being ashamed, she should have thought of that before. How on earth does she mean to face the Dauphin and all his court, if she is afraid of her old father and uncle?"

Just then, looking over his shoulder, he saw Joan standing in the doorway, with very downcast look, but having otherwise much the appearance of a steady young page. Her father, laughing with surprise and delight, bade her come nearer; instead of which, she

retreated again out of sight, and was followed by her mother and Catherine, who turned her about like a chicken before the fire, and came to the satisfactory conclusion that, on the whole, it was a much more proper dress for such a journey than any other would be.

Zabillet gave her sundry sage counsels, some of which were afterwards of great use to her; and it was now time for the parents and daughter to take leave of one another, which they did with a good deal of crying all round. Finally, the whole party walked down the town to see the worthy couple off.

## CHAPTER IX.

**A**KING'S messenger, named Colet de Vienne, attended by an archer, now arrived from Chinon, and had a private conference with the governor; in consequence of which, the next time Joan presented herself, he said to her, somewhat ungraciously—

“ You may go, since you will, under the conduct of this man, who will see you safely to Chinon. Are you ready for the journey?”

“ Yes, sir,” said Joan; “ my friends have supplied me with a horse.”

“ Go then,” said he, “ happen what may!”

And he gave her a sword, of no great value. The king's messenger followed her out, and said drily, “ Maiden, I await your orders.”

"I must first take counsel," replied Joan, "with the Sire de Metz and the Sire de Poulengey, who have undertaken to accompany me."

"Oh, indeed!" said the king's messenger, who seemed favourably impressed by the information. At the same instant Bertrand de Poulengey, coming up to them, said to Joan, with a smile—

"I see you have a sword."

"Yes, sir," said she; "but I hope never to take a life with it. The governor gave it me, and bade me go forward, happen what might. Moreover, he said this messenger would take me to the king."

"I have already spoken with the governor, and also with the Sire de Metz," said De Poulengey, "and all is arranged for our starting at break of day to-morrow. Be ready, therefore, and of stout heart, for the way is

long, the country swarming with Burgundians, the rivers swollen, and we shall have to traverse ways where there are neither roads nor bridges."

"Fear not for me, beau sire," replied she, cheerfully. "I have no fear for myself."

Her simple preparations were soon made, for a small saddle-bag contained all she took with her. The tailor who had made her clothes, and was proud of their fit, readily undertook to write a few lines, at her dictation, to her parents, telling them she was on the point of starting, and begging them to remember her in their prayers. Laxart, who was again in the town, promised the note should be safely delivered.

"The curate," said she, "will read it to them."

It was a dark, wintry morning, February 13, 1429, when the little party left Vaucouleurs

It consisted of Joan, De Poulengy, De Metz, Colet de Vienne, Richard the archer, and two pages. The Sires were fully armed ; and “perhaps never,” says Charles Mills, “was armour more beautiful than in those days of chivalry, when France was one vast tilting-ground for the culled and choice-drawn cavaliers of the two mighty monarchies of Europe. It was equally removed from the gloomy sternness of chain-mail, and the elaborate frippery of embossed steel.” Esquires, however, had nothing more than a simple coat of mail, without hood or hose, though their rank in nobility might equal that of the knights :\* and for prudential reasons our Sires were willing that their course should not be betrayed to watchful foes by the glitter of polished steel among the leafless

\* Mills’s “Hist. of Chiv.,” i. 100, 108.

trees. Early as they started, there was a cluster of bystanders to wish them good speed; and more than one mother of a family looked wistfully after the young girl who, though of robust make, appeared so small and slender on her high horse, riding between the two tall, strong-built men.

So now they were off—she could hardly believe it! “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul,” said the wise king; and hers was now fairly on the road to its accomplishment. Serena, between Sir Calepine and Sir Calidore, was not more content. Now and then, one or the other of her champions gave her a word of advice, which she obeyed with great quickness; but she sat her horse so well and fearlessly, that they soon began to talk to one another about the state of the country, and she could not do better than listen. De Metz spoke viru-

lently of the English as invaders ; and De Poulengy temperately observed how, in long-past times, the Normans had been the aggressors, and annexed the whole realm of England to their duchy ; and he described how the English hated them, and were subjugated by them, which was all new to Joan. And he went on to tell how King John of England shamefully lost all his French possessions that had come to him by lawful inheritance, and how our national honour thereby incurred a stain which his successors were impelled to wipe out. De Metz here observed that our Henry the Third and Edward the First and Second did not do much towards it.

De Poulengy replied, no, Edward the Second played into the hands of the French by weakly consenting to do homage in the person of his son for his French possessions ; and that it was not surprising that the young prince, when he

became Edward the Third, should show more spirit, and even seek the crown of France in right of his mother ; but that was no reason why he should get it, and, as it was, he got a good deal more than it was well for him to have. *Imperium in imperio* was a bad thing for any country ; people that spoke different languages would never, in reality, be brothers, though they might be friends.

De Metz scoffed at the thought ; and then De Poulengey went on to observe that Henry the Fifth of England, to divert his own subjects from strife among themselves, must needs send troops over to the Duke of Burgundy, which was as impertinent as meddling between master and man ; for those proud, overgrown dukes *were* subjects, whatever they might think of it. And he went on, in a desultory way, touching up all the dukes, one after another, more briefly than Barante has done—all of which, as

De Metz was very likely to know it already, may have been for the benefit of Joan.

But when they began to talk of the murders, first of the Duke of Orleans and then of the Duke of Burgundy, leaving the quarrel to their respective sons, they were getting to events which they themselves, indeed, could not remember, but which their fathers had witnessed, and of which they could speak with animation and detail. And they traced the rise and progress of this present war, and how, on the death of our Henry the Fifth, his son, though yet an infant, seemed to have every advantage on his side, the whole power of England at his command, soldiers inured to warfare and accustomed to victory, and generals such as France, alas! could not boast—mastery not only of Guienne, but of Paris, and of almost all the northern provinces.

“But,” said De Poulengy, “our sovereign,

as the English know in their hearts, is the true and undoubted heir of the monarchy, whatever steps may have been taken to set him aside. He has the loyalty of his nobles, his soldiers, and the mass of the people to count upon, and God will protect the right!" Saying which he looked at Joan, and smiled.

"The odds would not be so against us," said De Metz, abruptly, "if it were not for Philip of Burgundy. Of the English themselves, were we fairly matched, I should have no fear."

"There is immense force in them, however," said De Poulengey. "Look at their Sire Talbot, Sire Fastolfe, and Sire Glacidas! \* I am, however, in great hope that the provisions which Sire Fastolfe is even now endeavouring to convey to his famishing troops from Paris, may be intercepted by the strong party we have waiting for him at Rocroi."

\* Sir William Gladstone.

This was spoken the day after the famous “battle of the herrings,” in which our Fastolfe was victorious and the French completely defeated.

“Should the good cheer,” added De Poulengey, “which Sire Fastolfe has provided for his own men, be whipped up by Dunois and Saintrailles, and carried into Orleans, it will be acceptable enough there, for they are now reduced to such desperate straits, that if our young maiden, here,” looking at Joan, “does indeed save them, it can hardly be by anything short of a miracle.”

De Metz’s countenance here became a little troubled; and presently, taking advantage of the narrowing of the by-road, he rode on a few paces in advance. De Poulengey, continuing beside Joan, endeavoured to converse with her; but finding her shy and silent, he presently rode on to De Metz, leaving her to herself.

"What troubled you just now?" said he to him. "I saw by your looks that you were discomposed."

"Pray Heaven," said De Metz, in a low voice, glancing over his shoulder as he spoke, "that the maiden may be honest and true."

"What doubt is there of it?" said De Poulengey, in surprise. "I, at least, have none; and I thought you had not."

"Nor had I; but yet—supposing all should not be right——"

"Why should we suppose so?" said De Poulengey.

De Metz only screwed up his face into an incomprehensible expression.

"You should have thought of this before," said De Poulengey, impatiently. "It is too late, now, to entertain suspicions; you are embarked in the enterprise and must make the best of it. For my part, I think your

doubts are injurious. See, we are coming to a river."

And, turning about, he took Joan's rein and guided her horse as they dashed through the water, which proved rapid and deep. The excitement of the passage did them all good. De Poulengy began to relate an accident that had occurred to him in attempting to ford a river, which swept him down the current, and De Metz capped the story with another and another, apparently forgetful of his late suspicions. They slept at the Abbey of St. Urbain the first night, where they heard that many disorderly bands were abroad. Next morning, they plunged into a thick wood, with nothing deserving the name of a road through it, only a couple of ruts, full of water, which led them a devious course, sometimes under huge trees, with low sweeping horizontal branches, that made them stoop to their horses' necks to

avoid the fate of Absalom ; sometimes leading to open glades, where the woodmen had piled stacks of fire-wood. This forest harboured wolves and wild-boars, besides affording shelter to numerous bands of marauders. De Metz had wild stories to tell of Aimerigot Marcel and Geoffroi Tête-noir—two notorious free-booters of the past generation.

"As for Tête-noir," said he, "he was a desperate fellow, who knew neither fear nor pity, and would put a knight or squire to death as soon as a peasant. He had a gang of four hundred men, who received their regular wages, paid by him monthly ; and he held in his castle a kind of open market, where goods and furniture, cloth of Brussels, peltry, and mercery, with iron and steel ware, leather, and other commodities were to be found as plentifully as in Paris. We need not ask how they were got ! The varlet ! his castle was vic-

tualled for a seven years' siege. He was in the pay of the English, the rascal! and yet he preyed now and then upon them as well as on us, which makes one almost forgive him."

De Poulengey laughed. "It was well," said he, "that when the war was over, our nobles and knights united to put down these villains, and besiege them in their strongholds. It is much to be feared there will be the same thing to do at the end of the present war."

"It would have been a hard matter," pursued De Metz, "to bring Tête-noir to terms, had he not, in heading a sally, received a cross-bow shot in the face. The old rogue, finding it likely to prove mortal, called his men to him. 'In yonder chest,' said he, 'are thirty thousand marks. I will give them according to my conscience. I leave fifteen hundred marks to St. George's chapel in this castle, two thousand to the good woman who

is tending me, and the rest ye may equally divide if ye be so minded; but if not—why, there stands an axe, break open the coffer, my lads, and get each what you can!' Ha, ha, ha! Did you ever hear that before?"

"No, I never did," said De Poulengey. "It is a very good story, and sounds like a true one."

Here a rushing was heard through the woods, which brought them to a pause; but it proved to be only a herd of deer.

"He was bought off by bribery at last," resumed De Metz, "and prevailed on by a good round sum to try an honest life; but it went hard with him. 'Ah!' said he, sighing over the retrospect, 'to rob and to pillage was, all things considered, a right pleasant life! Sirs, there is no sport or glory in this world that is to compare with it. Sure, what a joy it was to ride out for whatever might turn up,

and fall in, it might be, with a rich prior or merchant, or a string of mules of Montpelier, of Narbonne, of Toulouse, or of Carcassone, laden with Brussels cloth, or with furs, coming from the fairs, or with spices coming from Damascus or Alexandria. Whatever we met, all was ours, or else ransomed at our pleasure.' The old villain! It was not likely such as he should die in his bed. He met the end he deserved."

The short day was now rapidly declining, and as they skirted an exhausted quarry, they came upon a hermitage, scooped in the rock, with a little chapel beside it. The king's messenger rode up to De Poulengy and said—

" Beau sire, I noted this place as I came, and you will find it the best lodging for the night within reach. The hermit is dead and buried, and everything within remains much as he left

it. There is the chapel for the damsel, and the cell for yourselves, while we men can make shift to bestow the horses in the cow-house, and lie there ourselves, or in the dairy."

"This seems a providential arrangement," said De Poulengey; "but how shall we do for our supper?"

"Be at no care for that, beau sire," said the messenger, "for Richard the archer has brought two loaves and two bottles of wine, and there are chestnuts in plenty, and, I think, some mouldy cheese in the hermitage cupboard, and enow of hay in the rack for all our horses."

"That will do rarely," said De Metz; "cheese is none the worse for being mouldy. You may bring us a bottle of wine, and one of the loaves, and the Sire de Poulengey and I will drink to the hermit's memory in the cell,

while the maid prays for his soul in the chapel. Bring us a faggot or two that we may have a good fire ; but mind you close the shutters, that the light betray us not.”

Joan having supped temperately, according to her wont, betook herself to the chapel, where she placed one or two rough pieces of furniture against the door to barricade herself in, and then went to her devotions—after which she lay down to sleep, in her clothes, which, it may here be observed, she continued to do throughout her long journey, according to her mother’s express desire.

The two sires, meantime, were growing confidential and cosy under the genial influence of the cheerful wood fire, which, however, they had not fuel enough to keep up very long. De Metz began by saying in a low voice—“ De Poulengey, I don’t think there’s much in that girl.”

" You seemed to think there was much and too much in her, at one time yesterday," observed De Poulengey.

" But apart from sorcery, I mean ; she has very little to say."

" And therefore shows her sense in saying little, in my opinion," said De Poulengey. " What could she have to talk about except sheep and goats ?"

" Supposing she should turn shy before the king, though, De Poulengey ; it will put you and me in a very awkward position."

" Do not let us trouble ourselves with any suppositions of the kind," said De Poulengey. " He has sent for her himself, under the rose, not through you and me, but De Baudricourt ; and I shrewdly suspect Queen Yolante may have put Duke Charles up to sending for the maid on pretence of wanting her assistance, for the purpose of seeing what she really

was, and whether she laid claim to any miraculous powers or not."

"It may have been so," said De Metz, musing. "Certes, she conducted herself on that occasion in a way no one could have reckoned on. De Baudricourt said he was never so struck dumb in his life. I hope she will not make you and me feel so silly."

"Have no fear of it," said De Poulengey, who, however, did not relish the suggestion. After a pause—"By the way, De Metz," said he, still in a cautious undertone, "there is one thing which has much surprised me respecting yourself."

"What is it?" said De Metz, all attention.

"You know," said De Poulengey, "the irreparable wound my affections received in the lamentable death of the Lady Adeline, rendered it impossible for me ever again to entertain the thought of marriage; but I must say

I marvel that you, who have never sustained such a blight, should persist in remaining a bachelor."

"That's a sore subject, my friend," said De Metz, biting his lip, "and Rosaure de St. Vidal has to answer for it. You know that a year or two ago she was the loveliest girl at court. Well, I wore her favour, I won her grace, and we were on the very brink of bringing things to a conclusion, when she had the impertinence to ask me what were my testamentary dispositions."

"A very odd question for a young lady," said De Poulengey.

"Very," said De Metz. "So mercenary you know."

"And did you break with her upon that?"

"For no other reason."

"Well, that was rather a strong measure."

"I'm always hot and quick. It's my nature. I cannot be as calm as you."

"Still, if your heart had really been bestowed—"

"I took it back again. For a girl in her teens to be considering what she should get if I died, caused a revulsion in my feelings."

"It was very strange, certainly," said De Poulengey. "What could put such a thing in her head, I wonder?"

"She said every man ought to care for the welfare of others, as much after his death as before it; and that therefore, every man who had anything to leave, ought to make his will, especially on the point of marriage, and in such unsettled times."

"There was a good deal of truth in that, De Metz."

"Yes; but from such a quarter!"

"Might not you have yielded the point?"

"I told her I had an aversion to making my will while I was well, and likely to continue so. I might as well order my coffin; as I should be sure to want it some time or other. She laughed, which I thought unfeeling; and said making my will would bring me no nearer to death. I thought she must want a pretence to break with me, and had found a very unseemly one; so I returned her letters and favours, and made my bow."

"And came down to sulk at Vaucouleurs."

"As for sulking—I knew she wanted me to distinguish myself and win my golden spurs, and that I could not annoy her more than by sinking into a mere country gentleman. I would not go to court now, if I had not ascertained that she is safe in her father's old fastness in Auvergne. But our fire is just out, and we shall be in the dark,

so we may as well betake ourselves to the hermit's bed of dried leaves."

"Well," said De Poulengey, "it is a strange story."

## CHAPTER X.

RICHARD the archer, being so superfluous as to think he would walk round the premises and see all was right, entangled his foot in the rope of the hermit's bell, and gave a sudden toll which startled every one from their sleep, and frightened himself as much as any one, because at the same time he heard a rush from the immediate neighbourhood of the hermitage of what he took to be a pack of wolves. He got a sound rating for his pains, and turned into the cow-house rather sheepishly ; it being the apprehension of the whole party that this noisy proclamation of their whereabouts would draw on them the very danger they sought to avoid.

In spite of this, they were soon fast asleep again: but, a little before day, Colet de Vienne, the king's messenger, was awakened by what seemed to be the tramp of a considerable body of men, who, by their irregular march and unruly voices he judged to be no honester than they should be, and there seemed to be a few horsemen among them, for he heard a horse neigh. He listened in the utmost anxiety lest they should come up to the hermitage, but in the extreme darkness they overlooked it and passed onward, one of them audibly saying, "It cannot be but that we shall overtake them."

As soon as they were quite gone, Colet de Vienne went to the two gentlemen and said to them, "Fair sirs, I regret to tell you there are loose livers in the wood, who, if we are unwary, may endanger our safety. About a couple of hundred, as I should think, passed

close by us just now, and I conclude them to be looking for us, since I heard one of them say, ‘It cannot be but that we shall overtake them.’ If they be mere routiers, they will be glad enough to make you pay heavy ransom for your liberties; and if they be Burgundians, who have got wind of the Maid’s pretensions, they will give you no liberty on any terms. Wherefore my counsel is, that, without waiting for the sun, we should steal off as soon as we can dimly discern our way—not by the road we intended, which would bring us on their heels, but by a circuit of a few miles through the wood.”

The Sire de Poulengy reflected a little, and then said,—

“ Since the troop, as you tell us, is so numerous, it will be no cowardice, but mere prudence, to do as you say; only let us beware of

going far astray and coming back again to the same place; for though I have been hereabouts before, it was long ago."

"Richard the archer," replied Colet de Vienne, "knows the wood well, and says he can guide us."

"Let him take the lead, then, in Heaven's name," said De Poulengey; "and the sooner we are in the saddle the better."

They all mounted therefore, while it was yet barely light, and the air felt chill and raw, Richard the archer leading the way over slippery uneven ground, and under sweeping branches, which required the most careful riding.

After about an hour thus spent in perfect silence, Richard the archer came to a dead stop, and said,—

"Faith, I believe I have lost the way after all."

"Then thou deservest to have thy fool's pate well belaboured," said De Metz, indignantly.

"That won't mend matters," said De Poulengey, softly; and they were all at a standstill, thinking which way they should go, when Joan exclaimed, joyfully,—

"Hark! there are church bells!"

"Oh, then all's right," said the archer, plunging again into the wood; and the rest followed blindly after him, trusting he had recovered the scent.

"I hope we shall be in time for prayers!" said Joan.

"Prayers!" cried De Metz, very wrathily, "we have other fish to fry than to pull up at every church door for prayers, I can tell you! Why, you might have prayed in the hermitage chapel all night, if it had been your pleasure! Prayers, indeed!—bless my heart!" and he rode on in advance, very crustily. De Pou-

ey presently joined him ; while Joan prayed  
tly that they might all be safely deli-  
d.

Where's that girl ?" said De Metz, looking.  
“ Oh ! out of earshot. De Poulengey,  
gin to be sick and tired of this job.”

What, already ?" said De Poulengey.

What do you mean by already ?" said  
Metz, testily. “ I mind dangers and diffi-  
ties as little as any man when I see my  
se clear ; but as to this business, I tell  
plainly, I have my misgivings. I had most  
mprehensible dreams in that old hermitage  
night, and whatever they might portend, I  
k they boded no good.”

Pooh, pooh,” said De Poulengey, “ the her-  
's bed was full of fleas, and kept me awake,  
ch was worse than your dreaming even that  
hermit himself came and gave you cold pig.  
are travelling on an empty stomach, which

does not agree with you ; but all these fumes and vapours will be dispelled when you get something to eat."

" One would think we knew exactly where that would be, to hear you talk," said De Metz. " and besides, I am not quite a slave to my meals, I hope. But, I own, it does try a man's temper to be wandering hither and thither, in this way, after a booby that does not know a weasel from a stoat."

" Oh, yes, I do, beau sire," said Richard the archer, who could not silently lie under the gross imputation ; " he has the longer tail, and a tip of black at the end of it."

De Metz laughed, called him a saucy apé, and bade him go forward, out of hearing of his betters.

" De Poulengey," resumed he, presently, in a troubled voice, " when I looked round at that girl just now, her lips were muttering

like this,—‘num, num, num—’ Now, why should she be talking to herself?”

“Probably at her prayers,” suggested De Poulengey.

“Saying her prayers at proper times and seasons is one thing,” said De Metz; “but to be always at them, in season or out of season, is another, and I own I don’t like it. How do we know she is not saying them backwards? If I had good reason to think her a witch or a sorceress, I should be tempted to pitch her down the next stone-quarry, or, at any rate, leave her here in the wood to shift for herself.”

“Aye, but luckily you have no good reason,” said De Poulengey; “and I really think, De Metz, if you yourself would just say over six Paternosters, and as many Credos, we should very likely at the end of that time find ourselves out of the wood.”

De Metz made a face; but just at that instant Richard the archer cried out—

“Be of good cheer, sirs, we are in the right track.”

“There!” said De Poulengy, laughing, “you see the very proposal for it brought us through.”

De Metz did not answer, but spurred forward, and suddenly they all came out on the brink of the table-land on which grew the wood, and saw, down below them, a wide tract of country, a great deal of it under water, and covered in other parts with dense woods; while in a clearing just beneath them was a small hamlet and a village inn, before which they could plainly discern lounging a good many men, both horse and foot, some of whom were in plate-armour that flashed in the sun.

Colet de Vienne said, “Rely on it, fair sirs, those are some of the men who passed the

hermitage, and that others of them are hanging about. Although I see a knight's pennon among them, I doubt their honest intentions; and my advice therefore is, that we keep on this table-land, under cover of the wood."

Accordingly, they all turned into the wood again, to the secret annoyance of De Metz, who would gladly have had his breakfast. The archer still led the way, and soon brought them to a forest glade, whereon stood a neat woodman's hut, with a stone *abreuvoir* for horses beside it. De Metz gladly exclaimed, "Here is a place at which we may bait," and, riding up to the door, loudly called out, "House!" which was answered by a shrill scream from within.

"Husband! oh, husband! the Burgundians are upon us!" a poor woman exclaimed, wringing her hands.

"Peace, you silly woman! we are no Bur-

gundians, but Armagnacs," said the archer, going into the house, "and are on the king's service." On which the poor woman's fears were allayed; and when she found what they wanted, she gladly gave them refreshment; for she had just milked her cow and drawn a batch of hot loaves from the oven.

She was very kind to Joan, and said to her, "I see you are a woman, for your long hair has escaped from your hood;" and she took her into another room to wash her face and bind her hair; and told her she must not be surprised at her fear of the Burgundians, for they had carried off her only son. "And my little girl," said she, "was devoured by the wolves." The poor woman cried when she said this, and Joan comforted her, kissed her, and prayed for her.

The woodman came in, and said the forest was swarming with routiers; so it was then

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decided that the travellers should remain where they were till dusk, and then slip away under cover of the dark; and the woodman's wife was glad of their company, for she said they protected her, and she led a lonely life. She dressed them a good plain dinner; and towards dusk the woodman came in and said, "The coast is clear now, and I will start you on your way." So he led them through the woods till the moon was up, and then bade them good night. Before they separated, there passed them a long file of wolves, silently trotting one after another with their muzzles to the ground; but whatever mischief they were after, they did not offer to attack them. Joan had found a subject on which she could speak at last; for when De Metz asked her if she were frightened, she said No; and she told him several wolf-stories current in her neighbourhood, which greatly interested him.

But what most cheered his fancy was the legend of the were-wolf, which could assume the form of a man at pleasure.

Thus they rode on, hour after hour, as long as the moon was up. But when the moon had set, the night became so dark that it was no good to go on, for they only got entangled in the trees. Then De Poulengy and De Metz had a little consultation; and then De Poulengy commanded a halt, and that the horses should be tethered round them while they rested, and one man should play sentinel while the rest slept. Then said De Metz to Joan, "Maid, seat yourself with your back against this tree. You may keep awake or go to sleep, whichever you like, for it concerns no one but yourself; but the Sire de Poulengy and I are going to be on either side of you, and if the wolves come, they will eat us first," saying which, he cast himself

on the ground, and was, or seemed to be, asleep in a moment; and De Poulengey followed his example, only keeping awake long enough to say his prayers. Joan was grave, but not frightened, and addressed herself with great seriousness to her devotions. She remained awake, thus employed, a great deal longer than the others; but at length she too was overcome by weariness, and fell into a light sleep. Colet de Vienne, pacing his rounds, kept his eyes and ears open, so that the very grass could not grow without his seeing and hearing it. When two or three hours had thus passed, day began to dawn; and De Metz, waking with a start, cried, “ Hallo, where am I ? This is even worse than the hermit’s cell.”

The others started up at the sound of his voice, and were soon in the saddles, feeling stiff and unrefreshed. But presently emerging

from the forest, they were sweeping along at a pace that warmed them, and at length they reached a wayside inn, with a faded garland on the ale-stake. Here they alighted for breakfast; and Colet de Vienne, who was now on familiar ground, ordered hot dishes to be prepared, saying they were on the king's service.

"Take some wine, maiden," said De Metz, offering Joan a flaggon; "thou art benumbed." She would not taste any, however, till she had tempered it with water.

"Are you, then, the maid of Domremy?" cried the woman of the inn, joyfully. "Oh! I have heard of you; and people are expecting you along the road. God give you good fortune, good maiden! The best I have is at your service."

The innkeeper, after looking hard at De Metz and De Poulengey, now stepped forward

and said—"I suppose you have heard of the lost battle?"

"Lost? no! By whom?" said they, both together.

"By us," replied the innkeeper. "The regent-duke of Bedford, as you must know, had collected five hundred carts loaded with provisions for the troops besieging Orleans."

"Yes, yes!"

"The command of the convoy was given to Sir John Fescot, or whatever they call him, with sixteen hundred men. They started from Paris on Ash Wednesday, and proceeded by short marches as far as Rouvroi. Here, the foremost of our great captains, De Bourbon, Saintrailles, the two marshals of France, the Constable of Scotland, young Dunois, and many others, who had long been waiting with three or four thousand men to intercept the convoy, offered him battle. Only think

what odds ! The day should have been ours."

"How went it?" said the Sires, impatiently.

"The English captain formed his carts into a square, leaving only two openings. At these entrances he placed his archers and men-at-arms, the merchants and baggage being in the centre. In this way they waited two full hours for our troops, who drew up over-against them, but out of bowshot. Considering Fascat had only six hundred Englishmen, and all the rest riff-raff, you would say he ought to have been beaten ; but he was not. Our Scotch allies began the battle by attacking the entrances, but were repulsed with immense slaughter. About six-score gentlemen and five hundred common men were killed, most of them Scots."

"But what were we about?" cried De Poulengey.

"Many of our lords were killed, and Dunois wounded; and then our captains drew away. The English cried 'hooray-hooray,' and sat down to rosbif and beer. They passed the night comfortably in Rouvroi, and, next day, conveyed the five hundred carts triumphantly into their camp before Orleans. So many of the carts were laden with herrings, that they call it the 'battle of the herrings.' Only one Englishman of note was killed; only one prisoner made, and he was a Scot."\*

The intense disgust of the Sires at this narration cannot be described. As for Joan, she was quite confounded at what appeared to her the poltroonery of the French, though she was ashamed to say so; yet she was really grieved to hear that some of them were killed,

\* Named "Cannede ou Kennide"—Kennedy, of course. See Le Brun de Charmette's "Historie de Jeanne d'Arc," which I have only obtained since my MS. went to press.

and Dunois wounded. It only made her the more anxious to push forward, and stem, if possible, this tide of misfortune; and as her conductors were quite of the same mind, they pursued their long, long journey with very little rest or refreshment, now splashing across overflowed plains, now struggling through turbid rivers and panting up steep banks, now forcing their way through brakes and thickets, now concealing themselves behind rocks or in gravel-pits from some band of marauders; sometimes passing ruined castles, burnt farm-houses, and deserted villages; sometimes keeping aloof from robbers' towers and fastnesses; then, again, obtaining entrance in the king's name to some walled town, and refreshing themselves at some inn, where the townspeople came curiously about them, and learnt their errand, and wished them success.

Whether Colet de Vienne had prepared the

way for Joan by spreading the news of her mission, on his way to Vaucouleurs, or not, it was clear that her fame had outstripped her, and that the people were everywhere looking for her, as for one that should save France.

There are some people whose confidence is much enhanced by the confidence of others; and De Metz, as he rode boldly and proudly at her side, quite forgot those suspicions which had lately made him ready to drop her into a gravel-pit. In fact, he now really liked her very much, in an honest, brotherly kind of way, for he could not but be won by her piety, her modesty, her guilelessness, her courage, and her uncomplaining, silent endurance of many and daily hardships. As for her mission, he left that to take care of itself: it was quite out of his line to say whether she were or were not inspired; the king must look to that. All he had undertaken was to lead her to the king.

The king himself was at this time in as great perplexity and trouble as it was in his nature to be. In his grand old castle of Chinon, the embattled remains of which may be seen to this day, on the rising ground between Tours and Saumur—the Chinon of our Richard Cœur-de-Lion—he was deplored every fresh success of the English, but inclining very little to go forth and face them as long as he had the immediate means of leading an easy, voluptuous life. The loss of the “battle of the herrings” stunned him a good deal; he summoned a great council to consider what was to be done for the safety of Orleans, and on the very eve of its assembling, received from his messenger, Colet de Vienne, a letter from the maid of Domremy, saying she was coming to his assistance, and was awaiting his orders at the village of St. Catherine de Fierbois.

Charles knew not what to do. De Baudricourt's account of her had not impressed him in her favour, and he felt very little inclined to be the tool of an enthusiast. On the other hand, she might be an useful instrument, and revive the fainting courage of his people. After some consideration, he desired that she should come to the town of Chinon, and there await his orders.

Meanwhile, Joan was, as De Metz remarked, making up for lost time, by hearing three masses a day in the church of St. Catherine at Fierbois, and passing nearly her whole time within its walls. There, an old priest showed her a curious old sword, marked with five crosses, which much pleased her; and she said that if she were so happy as to find grace in the sight of the king, she would ask him to give it her.

After a little suspense, Colet de Vienne

returned and said she was to go forward. She asked where she was to lodge, and was told at an inn. She then begged very earnestly to know whether there was any respectable women with whom she could lodge, saying it was her mother's particular desire. Colet de Vienne replied that a very respectable woman named Catherine, would provide for her near the castle;\* with which she was well satisfied.

Meanwhile, it was warmly debated in council whether Charles should see her or not. The Duke d'Alençon,† and other great leaders, all had their several opinions. That of the king's favourite, the Sire de la Tremouille, was not without its weight. Some thought

\* "Chez une bonne femme."—*Procès*.

† Son of Jean le Sage, first Duke d'Alençon. He was prisoner to the English, and now on his parole, endeavouring to raise his ransom of six hundred thousand crowns.

she must be mad, others feared she might be in league with evil spirits, others were persuaded she would prove an artful impostor. Others, again, thought that, true or false, she might be an useful instrument.

Next day, several members of the council waited on her to hear what she had to say. In a stone vaulted room, with little in it but a table and some chairs and benches, they found a modest, self-possessed looking girl, who only showed by her deepening colour that she was at all embarrassed, standing in the dark, close-fitting habit with wide sleeves that might have become the son of a country gentleman, her long, dark brown hair simply bound round her head, one hand resting on the table in what was unconsciously the attitude of a princess receiving a deputation; while a step behind her, and no more, stood two men who might well have been

the said princess's lords in waiting, and one of whom, at least, was personally known to some of the council, as equerry to the king.

They were received, not with a country girl's short, quick, dipping courtesy, but with a slight, grave bend of the head. On their inquiring the nature of her message to the king, she declined to deliver it except to himself, saying that it came from the King of Heaven. De Poulengy and De Metz, who had been so struck by her reticence on the road, were now still more so at the self-possession with which she baffled the curiosity of these practised courtiers; and they themselves retired from the interview filled with surprise and admiration, and returned to the king with a highly favourable report.

In the words of an English poet who died before Joan was born—

"God had such favour sent her of His grace,  
That it ne seemed not by likelinesse  
That she was born and fed in rudenesse,  
As in a cot or in an ox's stall. . . .  
But so discreet and fair of eloquence,  
So benigne and so digne of reverence,  
And coulde so the people's heart embrace,  
That each her loved that looked in her face."

These honeyed accents, melting in the mouth,  
at were written of the ideal Griseldis, might  
we been penned of the real Joan. There  
no prose more true than genuine poetry.  
To conclude, the decision was made, and  
e hour named at which she was to appear  
fore the king.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE royal courtyard was one blaze of torch-light, and crowded with servitors and men-at-arms, when the shepherd girl of Domremy entered it, attended by the two faithful champions who had sworn on the cross to lead her to the king. These two nobles were now dressed, suitably to their rank, in velvet suits and short furred mantles, plumed caps, and no arms except their swords and daggers; but Joan, in her wide-sleeved, close-fitting tunic and hose, had no ornament but her own beautiful hair. As she passed onward, some viewed her with rudeness and levity, every demonstration of which, however, was checked by the stern looks of her companions. Wind instru-

ments were swelling in the distance ; everything had been prepared to dazzle and bewilder her ; the glare of fifty torches fell on the gold, and gems, and plumes, and scarlet robes of the first nobility in France, and no fewer than three hundred knights. Some of these were bending gracefully to whisper soft nonsense to the fairest ladies of the land, who shone in every colour of the rainbow and every variety of jewellery. Those of the old school, who attended Queen Yolante,\* wore sweeping trains of velvet, the length of which, however, was regulated by statute ; those attached to the queen consort, Mary of Anjou, favoured the newer fashion of deep borders of fur to their silken skirts, which

\* Yolante of Arragon, widow of Louis the Second, King of Sicily and Jerusalem, and Duke of Anjou, and mother of René, Duke of Barr, and of Mary of Anjou, married to Charles the Seventh of France. René (afterwards titular king) was now twenty-two years of age, and married to the Duke of Lorraine's daughter.

they gathered over the arm, in graceful folds. There were head-dresses like tapering cylinders, that reminded one of the leaning tower of Pisa, and also moon-shaped cushions spangled and stuck over with pearls and bead-work. These outrageous head-dresses were being vehemently preached against by an Augustine friar at Paris, and some of the youngest and fairest ladies had the sense to prefer golden networks and shining tissue veils. Troubadours and jongleurs were not wanting in this Vanity Fair; and certain young pages were wriggling in fits of suppressed laughter at the court-jester, who threw himself in Joan's way, in a ridiculous attitude; but a stern glance from De Poulengey, who knew him very well, made the poor ape shrink into a corner. Besides this, a real ape was present. There is an illustration of the scene in Monstrelet, but clearly of no authority, since Joan is portrayed in woman's clothes, whereas the

text, on the same page, tells us she was dressed like a man ; and the king looks advanced in years, whereas he was but seven and twenty.

This good-looking, good-humoured young monarch was the only simply dressed man in the assemblage, and purposely so,—to see whether Joan would mistake for him the gaily-dressed De la Tremouille, who assumed his place for the nonce.

It was an interesting moment. The Count de Vendome met and ushered her forward. The girl came slowly up the hall, but with firm eye and step, so intent on descrying the king, that she was thoughtless of self. The music had ceased : there was silence and suspense. De Metz and De Poulengy saw the ruse, and burned to apprise her of it, but could not. Their hearts beat faster than they would have done at the approach of the enemy. Joan reached the dais : she looked at the bedizened courtier in

its centre with surprise and disappointment, for she had long ago heard the king described, and knew his general appearance. She looked round, however, saw him,—their eyes met,—and she went up to him at once.

Oh, what a great sigh De Poulengey and De Metz gave simultaneously ! There was a general hum of relief and applause. Like Falstaff, instinct made her scent the blood royal ! We may make merry at it, but it was no jest to them. Every eye was strained to see what she would do next. She knelt, simply and reverently, on one knee, at Charles's feet.

“God give you good life, gentle king !” were her first words—they are embalmed in history—spoken in her distinct yet gentle voice—(“quite a womanly one,” young De la Val afterwards called it).

“I am not the king,” said he, smiling ; “he is there !” pointing to De la Tremouille.

"In the name of God," she replied, "it is none other than yourself. Most noble Dauphin, I am Joan the Maid, sent on behalf of God to aid you and your kingdom; and by His command I announce to you that you shall be crowned in the city of Rheims, and shall become His lieutenant in the realm of France."

"Come, that is a good hearing," said Charles, no longer dissimulating. "But how am I to know that you say true?"

"Gentle Dauphin," said she, earnestly, "why will you not believe me? I tell you that God *has pity* on you and your people; for St. Louis and Charlemagne are on their knees before Him day and night, praying for you and for them!"

I hold this one of the most striking figures that ever was used, whether in earnest or for rhetorical effect.

Charles was struck by the fervour with which it was uttered.

"You speak like one in authority," said he; "but I must have some farther proof of you than mere assertion before I accord you my belief. Come, let us have a word or two together."

And beckoning her to follow, he led her to the deep embrasure of a window, all the company falling back out of ear-shot, and there held conference with her, speaking, to judge by the dumb show, like friend with friend.

And now it was that, in the suspension of the primary object of interest, the courtiers fell upon the second, and Bertrand de Poulengey found himself surrounded by a swarm of brother equerries, and other old acquaintances of various degrees of rank, who over-powered him with questions; while De Mets

was borne off, seemingly an unreluctant captive, by a crowd of young nobles, even to the very side of the two queens, who had a thousand inquiries to make of him. Being of a gallant and genial disposition, in spite of a late fit of the sulks, he now absolutely basked in the sun of royal favour, and gave those majestic ladies a vivid and correct sketch of Joan's story, and his connection with it, up to that very moment. They were pleased with him, and praised his chivalrous behaviour. He of course omitted the incident of his thinking to throw her into a gravel-pit.

At this moment the king exclaimed, in a voice audible to them all, "Strange! This maiden has told me things which render it absolutely impossible for me to doubt her mission."

A universal hum ran round; while he, gracefully taking Joan by the hand, led her

up to the dais, and presented her to Mary of Anjou and Queen Yolante.

De Metz now found himself displaced ; and as he fell back, a voice maliciously whispered into his ear, " What would Rosaure de St. Vidal think of this journeying night and day, through woods and wilds, with a maiden of low degree ? "

" The Lady Rosaure de St. Vidal is welcome to think whatever she will of it," replied he, coldly, though greatly annoyed ; " her opinions are of no moment to me."

" I will tell her so when I see her," replied the spiteful Dame de la Boue, " for I return to Auvergne to-morrow."

De Metz bowed low, and passed from her. " It is singular," thought he, " what a mean little thorn can prick."

The amiable Dame de la Tour, who was a better friend to him, here beckoned him to her side, and spoke with him as a kind aunt

might have done, inquiring of his welfare during his long absence from court, hearing with interest all he had to say of his present adventure, and telling him in return much news of his friends and relations, accompanied by occasional kind incidental references to Rosaure de St. Vidal, for whom she assumed De Metz to entertain a brotherly regard. She added, "When I return to Auvergne, I shall repeat to her all you have told me."

De Metz thanked her even more in his heart than in his face, and wished she were going to-morrow. It is the office of some to stab, and of others to heal. One we love, and one we don't.

Soft music was again breathing all around, and a juggler was throwing balls, and the jester was dancing with the ape. Two envoys from Orleans were present. A circle had formed round the dais, where Joan yet remained at the royal footstool. De Poulengey

stood a little behind the inner ring, an observant witness. At length the Queen dismissed her, observing she must be tired; and De Poulengy stepping forward, took her hand, retreating backwards with her through the circle, and then led her quickly down the hall, followed by De Metz. The next minute they were in the cool night air, crossing the lighted court; then in the outer darkness, groping their way to the lodgings. Arrived there, De Poulengy pressed her hand heartily, saying, "I think you must now be satisfied!" and, consigning her to the good offices of the widow, he and De Metz retired to their quarters.

Catherine, looking full at Joan as she entered, hardly knew what to make of her. She asked her if there were anything she wanted. "I want nothing so much as to weep," said the poor girl: and sitting down,

she laid her arms on the table, and her head on her arms; but tears did not come. Presently a gentle voice beside her made her start: it was not the voice of Catherine, but of Father Pasquerel,\* who had been sent to her by Queen Yolante. He was a pale, fine old man, nearer seventy than sixty, with the transparent, colourless skin and attenuated face that Vandyke has given Gevartius, but with the deep, dark, penetrating eyes and sweet expression we are familiar with in Cardinal Consalvi. This old friar was instructed to sift her and form a judgment of her character and pretensions; but the goodness of his heart made him understand and pity her, and he applied himself to comfort and strengthen her before he did anything else.

\* "Lecteur du couvent des Augustins de Tours, . . . de l'ordre des frères-hermites de St. Augustin."

"Father!" cried Joan, directly she saw him, "will you hear me confess?"

"Certainly," said he, greatly pleased. So Catherine went out, closing the door after her, and the poor girl knelt at his feet and confessed. After she had risen, she said, "Father, will you write a letter for me to my parents?"

"Willingly, daughter," said he.

So when writing implements were procured, she dictated to him thus—

"Put 'Jesus Maria,' to begin with. All things should be done in the name of God."

So he wrote "Jesus Maria," and made a cross, in memory of our redemption.

"Dear and much honoured parents,—Oh, it seems so long since I saw you! I could think many months had passed." ("I have put that," said the friar. "I did not mean

you to have put that," said Joan; "I was only thinking aloud; but never mind.") "By the grace of heaven we have reached our journey's end. I will tell you all about it when I come home. I have seen the king, and delivered the message. He is a God-fearing young man" (Father Pasquerel bit his lip, but obeyed instructions); "I never heard any one speak more to my mind. I think he will inherit the kingdom of heaven. The old queen, that's the queen's mother, is something divine. I think St. Margaret would have been like her, if she had lived to be old." ("You need not have put that," said Joan; "but no matter.") "What will happen next I know not. I trust in God I shall take him to Rheims. But the siege must be raised first; and then I shall return to my spinning, and be the happiest maid in Domremy. Did you hear about the 'battle of

the herrings ? ” (“ I think we had better not enter upon that,” said Father Pasquerel, “ it will take up too much room.” “ And besides,” said Joan, “ there is nothing to tell to our credit.”) “ And now, my dear parents, I make this request with tears—” (“ No, no ; don’t put tears.”) “ Let Pierre come and take care of me : and, for me, I will take care of him. I should like Jacquemin, but I know he won’t come. Perhaps Jeannot might be spared, but there is much ploughing to be done now : however, the king says that if I like it, he shall be a man-at-arms. You know, the country *ought* to be saved.” (“ Put that very strong, father—make a very black mark.”) “ The Sires may want to go home, and then I shall be all alone, so at any rate send Pierre.” (“ Where’s the money to come from, though ? ” “ Oh,” said the friar, “ I dare say the king will see about

that." "Well then, put once more, 'Be sure you send Pierre.'") "The grace of God be with you all, Amen.—Your daughter, Joan."

"Let me kiss it," said Joan, "and that will be the same as my mark."

Father Pasquerel undertook to forward the letter, and so he did, but he showed it to the king and queens first, who were all much touched and pleased by the simplicity of the Maid.

Meanwhile, the early closing hour having already passed, and Joan being overcome with weariness, she accompanied her hostess into the little bed-room, which adjoined the sitting-room, but before she lay down beside her, she said her prayers.

Now, it must be borne in mind that Joan had been eleven days and nights upon the road, never getting a good night's rest, undressed and in bed, her mind constantly on

the full stretch, her strength tried by unaccustomed and protracted horse-exercise—she was just in a state to walk in her sleep ; at least, the only case I have witnessed of it was one where there had been broken rest, great fatigue, and an overwrought mind.

Imagine her, then, scarce risen from her knees and seated on her bed, about to loosen her dress, overcome by irresistible drowsiness as she sat. She sleeps, she dreams, the strange scenes she has lately passed through blend with fantastic unrealities. Now she is threading pathless forests with her champions, now fording a turbid river and borne down by it to the boundless ocean ; now, she sees her parents on the bank, wringing their hands; now she is conscious of that ineffable sweetness permeating every sense which is said sometimes to accompany drowning. Now she seems struggling in mortal agony for breath (having

sunk on her bed, poor maiden, and the tight collar of her tunic nearly choking her); anon a hand comes from the clouds and leads her onwards. She seems, as we probably have all dreamed, some time or other, to be *treading on air*.

And now Joan really rises from her bed, but not awake, and with the strange power of somnambulism finds her way forth, quietly opening and closing doors without disturbing her soundly-sleeping companion. I do not ask you to believe this; you may follow her with me or not, at your will. She has left the house; she is in the bright, cold moonlight, and walking steadily on, without a single mistake, to the castle. It seems to her, in her trance, that an angel is leading her. The distance is short: the few who meet her shrink aside without knowing why, for her eyes are open. A soldier, staggering to his quarters, accosts her

brutally. "You should not blaspheme God," she says to him, "when you may be in His presence to-morrow!"

It is still early in the night; the king has dismissed his guests, but is still conversing with a favoured few—the Duke d'Alençon, Charles de Bourbon, and De la Tremouille. He is carelessly seated under a canopy on the dais, and wears the golden circlet which he had removed when Joan first saw him: it is not difficult to know him for the king now. Most of the lights are extinguished, and the lower end of the great, vaulted hall is in gloom and darkness. De la Tremouille has just uttered some light jest, at which all have laughed. Suddenly Charles turns pale. "See!" said he, in an altered voice. "What's that?"

The buried majesty of Denmark could hardly have excited a greater thrill as it noiselessly trod the ramparts of Elsinore, than the girl

who, in a trance, but with her eyes open, steadily advanced.

“Hist!” said Charles, trembling, “is it the Maid? or her spirit?” and they all crossed themselves. Her right arm was raised on high, and there was a gentle smile on her face. She paused when she reached the king, and earnestly fixed her eyes a little above his head.

“Heaven be praised!” said she, softly, crossing her arms on her bosom.

“Joan!” said the king, sharply.

At his voice, she violently started, and instantly awoke.

“How came you? Why came you?” said he, fearfully.

“The angel brought me. I followed the angel,” said she, simply.

“You hear her!” said Charles, looking round. All bent their heads without speaking.

"You see the crown?" said she to them, pointing to the circlet.

"Oh, yes!" said they all, with one voice.

"And the angel?"

"I can't exactly say I did," said La Tremouille, whom she addressed.

"Nor you?" to D'Alençon.

"Not precisely."

"Ah, well! but *you* did?" to the king, who was mute.

"You *all* see the crown?" said she appealingly, and passing her hand over her eyes, as if to assure herself she was awake.

"Oh yes; we all see it," said they in chorus.

"Take care of it. . . . Give it him," said she to the king, who wonderingly took off the circlet and gave it to D'Alençon.

"It is very precious," said she to D'Alençon.  
"Guard it as you would your life."

He bowed.

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Then she waved her hand and turned to go, saying to the king, "You know you will be crowned at Rheims."

"I hope so."

She sighed deeply, and retired down the hall. They all looked at one another.

The king drew a deep breath, and said—  
"Gentlemen, this is passing strange!"

"Passing strange!" said they all.

"I think she saw something," said the king.

"She seemed to me asleep," said D'Alençon.

"Was it herself, think you? De la Tremouille, go inquire of the guard if they saw aught."

De la Tremouille did not at all like the errand, but obeyed, and returned saying all the guard acknowledged having seen the Maid, and that they had supposed she came on the king's business.

Next day, the soldier who had insult  
was drowned in trying to ford a river.

Of course people talked.\*

\* I have no wish to make others apply the f<sup>c</sup>  
passages as I have done, having only used them  
material: but they are worth reading.

On her trial—

“Interroguée se, *la première journée*, qu’ ell  
signe, et si son roi le vit: respond que oui. . . .

“Interroguée de quelle matière estoit ladis  
ronne: respond, ‘C'est bon assavoir qu’ elle e  
fin or.’

“Interroguée se l’angle qui l’aporta venoit d  
ou s’il venoist par terre: respond ‘Il vint de hat

“Interroguée en quel lieu il apparut à elle: :  
‘J'estoys presque tousjours à la prière, afin qu  
envoyast le signe au roi; et etoys à mon logis,  
chez une bonne femme près du chastel de Chinoi  
il vint; et puis nous alames ensemble au roi’ . . .

“Interroguée se tous ceulx qui la estoit ave  
veirent l’angle: respond qu’ elle pense que l’arc  
de Rheims, les seigneurs D’Alençon, et De la Tre  
et Charles de Bourbon le veirent. Et, quant à  
ronne, plusieurs gens la veirent que ne veu  
l’angle,” &c. &c.—Procès.

What do you make of it?

To me it is quite plain that Joan believed in this vision, whatever it was, which took place, she expressly says, the first day she saw the king; and her examiners were completely baffled in their endeavours to shake her testimony. There seems no simpler way of accounting for it than somnambulism.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE first result of the king's confidec  
T Joan, was her being removed from  
poor lodging to be the guest of the Sir  
Dame de Gaucourt, at the Château du  
dray. De Gaucourt was grand master of  
household.

Here she received crowds of curious  
interested visitors, all of whom were imp  
and amazed by her sense, modesty, and  
She went frequently to church, and  
there was often observed to shed tears.  
never wavered on the subject of her missio  
every other subject she was perfectly re  
able.

The king was so much interested i

that he sent for her often. He wanted to see her ride, and was surprised at her horsemanship. The Duke D'Alençon, who was on his parole, to obtain his ransom, was among her warmest eulogists. The deputies who had come from the beleaguered city to plead for succours, besought the king to send Joan to them. To satisfy his council, however, Charles resolved to take her to Poitiers, to be examined there by the university and parliament.

"De Poulengey," said De Metz, coming suddenly into his lodging one morning, "it is time for us to decide what we shall do. Joan is going in the king's train to Poitiers ; shall we cast in our lot with hers any longer or not ?"

"Which way do your own inclinations tend ?" said De Poulengey. "We have fulfilled our oath of bringing her to the king, and the adventure may either end here or be carried on."

"I declare I have warmed in it," said Metz. "When we come to look back on our journey, how interesting it was! And we were in plenty of credit for it too, which is neither of us took into the calculation. A great deal will seem to ripen: if all goes well at Poitiers, a bold blow will certainly be struck for Orléans, and it will be curious to see how Joan carries on there. So that, on the whole, if it makes no difference to you, I would sooner go forward than go back."

"It makes a great difference to me," said De Poulengy, "for I would a great deal sooner go forward. Poor Joan is hardly likely to spare us yet, and may perhaps like us better than new ones. We have been through a good deal together already, yet the tough work is only beginning. I hope that we three may as well stick together to the end of the campaign, which may be a long time off."

very long ; and then we can all go back to Barr."

"Agreed ; and I am glad of it, for I like the Maid more and more. Then, since we are going to join fates, why should not you and I, De Poulengey, become brothers in arms, and unite ourselves in a holy bond of friendship, like your namesake Du Guesclin and Olivier de Clisson ?"

"I have thought of it already," said De Poulengey, "and am greatly inclined towards it ; though Bertrand du Guesclin is a much greater favourite of mine than Olivier de Clisson."

"Then do you, as you are the better scribe, write out a form at once, and I will sign it."

"That will be hot and quick," said De Poulengey, smiling ; "and we shall not want a bond to keep us together."

"No time like the present, and no better security than a bond," said De Metz. So as De Poulengey saw his heart was in it, he made no more opposition, but took pen, ink, and parchment, and wrote out a form, somewhat shorter than Du Guesclin's, but to the same purport.

"To all whom these letters present may concern, Jean de Novelompont, dict De Metz, and Bertrand de Poulengey, equerry of the King of France's stable, greeting. Be it known to you, that to confirm perpetual love and friendship between us, we promise, swear, and agree between ourselves, to the things here following. Be it known that I, Jean de Novelompont, Sire de Metz, desire always to go hand in hand with you, Bertrand de Poulengey, in whatever enterprise or adventure you undertake, always provided it shall not

be against the King of France and our liege lords; and I promise you to aid you and comfort you to the utmost extent of my ability in whatever thing you may require. *Item*, if any one, save the King of France, shall attempt to harm you in body or goods, I promise to rescue and succour you to the best of my ability. *Item*, whatever comes to me in the way of ransom of prisoners or lawful spoils of war, you shall have half. *Item*, I will defend your body as if you were my brother. And in case I should know of anything whereby you may sustain wrong or blame, I shall acquaint you with it. And I, Bertrand de Poulengey, promise you, Jean de Metz, the very same things, to wit, &c. &c. And these things we, Jean and Bertrand, do mutually promise and swear to observe and perform, on the holy Gospels, corporally touched by us, and thereunto we put our

signatures and seals at Chinon this — day  
of April, in the year of grace 1429.”

This document, being to the entire satisfaction of De Metz, was duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and ratified by an embrace.

“ And now,” said De Poulengey, “ as neither of us are rich, and your page, Jean de Honnecourt, is ailing, I propose we should send him home, and make my boy Julian serve us both.”

Which De Metz gladly accepted.

“ I remember,” said De Poulengey, “ when I was a boy of Julian’s age, thinking a man of thirty-six well-stricken in years ; whereas, now I am thirty-six, I feel myself just as young as I was ten years ago, and find life as full of romantic interest. And though, in the interim, I have had many troubles, and one great grief, I find that every human pain may be outlived, if without the sting of sin and the

burden of crime. I am ready to believe now, that thus it may be at forty-six, and even fifty-six."

De Metz looked doubtful. "I cannot say as to that," said he, "but I am quite willing to try."

The king had already supplied Joan with a page, in a quick, sharp boy, of good birth, named Louis de Contes, who in after life was Seigneur de Rouyan et de Dengles. This youngster, who was highly pleased with his appointment, did not find his dignity at all soiled by brushing the clothes and performing the errands of the maid of Domremy, behind whose chair he stood at meals.

The king and court now removed to Poitiers, where Joan's case was referred to the learned doctors. She was lodged at the house of Maître Jean Raboteau, an advocate of the parliament, whose wife treated her with motherly kindness.

The poor girl foretold no more than came to pass, when she said, riding to Poitiers—

“I know that great trials await me at this place; but the Lord will bring me out of them all.”

Reignault de Chartres, archbishop of Rheims and lord chancellor of France, assembled the most eminent theologians to take part in the examinations. They proceeded to Raboteau's house, where Joan received them in the dining-hall, and then seated herself on a bench. They called on her for an account of her mission, which she gave with simplicity, and without hesitation.

“Joan,” said a Dominican, “you say that God desires to save the country. Surely, He can do it without your assistance!”

“Let the men-at-arms fight,” said she, “and God will give them the victory.”

“And in what language or dialect did these

voices speak to you?" said Father Seguin, in his sharp, provincial accent.

"In better French than yours," said she quickly; which made the grave doctors smile.

"Do you believe in God?" rejoined Father Seguin, angrily. "Well, then, God will not expect us to put faith in you unless you give us a sign."

"I did not come here," replied she, "to perform signs and miracles. My sign will be to raise the siege of Orleans. Give me troops, and I am ready to start."

The examination was protracted day after day; and in the interim two friars-minors were sent to Domremy, to learn what character she bore there. The assembly also consulted the Archbishop of Embrun, who wrote a treatise on the subject.

During the intervals between her examinations, Joan received visits of curiosity and

interest from ladies of every quality, and even from her examiners themselves ; councillors, advocates, grey-haired judges, all came to see what she was in private life, and were prepossessed in her favour. Still they continued to harass her with doubts, and to quote learned authorities for their scruples.

"Hear me," said she. "There is more in the book of God than in any of yours. I know neither A nor B, but I come from Him to raise the siege of Orleans, and to anoint the Dauphin at Rheims. It will be needful, however, to write first to the English."

The friars-minors, returned from Domremy with a satisfactory report. Finally, not to go into every painful detail, it was decided that she was a good girl and true, and that the king might avail himself of her assistance.

Charles showed his alacrity to do so by immediately raising her to the rank of a mili-

tary commander.\* That is, she became to all intents and purposes as much a knight-banneret or leader of knights as a woman could be. A beautiful suit of plate-armour adapted to the graceful contour of her neck and shoulders was made for her; but she begged the king to let her have the sword marked with five crosses in the church of St. Catherine at Fierbois, which was accordingly sent for. The nuns of St. Catherine sent her a crimson velvet surcoat, embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*; and from some other quarter she received a blue satin hat, looped and fringed with gold: but her preference was for plainer habiliments. She gave her own directions for her banner. It was to be of white satin, embroidered in the middle with a figure of the Saviour holding the globe in His hand,

\* Barante.

seated on clouds, with two angels adoring Him one of whom bore a lily ; and with the supercription, "Jesus Maria." Under this sign she would conquer. De Poulengey and De Metz now joyfully came to welcome her into their brotherhood. "You are now," said they, "our sister-in-arms, superior in military rank to ourselves, and we shall fight under your banner. Pray address us no longer by the cold title *beau sire*, but as your brothers, De Metz and De Poulengey."

"And to you," said she, "I must always be Joan."

"We take you at your word," said they, readily.

Joan had a little incident for De Metz's ear. Among the many dames and damsels of high degree who had paid their respects to her at the advocate's, there was one young lady of remarkable beauty, who came when

she happened to have no other visitor. This young lady's countenance, lovely as it was, had decidedly something *espiègle* in it: she made a thousand minute inquiries of Joan, especially respecting her journey, without ceremony and almost trenching on politeness. Throughout her cross-questioning, she fixed on her a pair of brilliant black eyes that seemed determined to read every thought in her heart. When her catechism was ended, she paused for an instant, and then rose, saying—

“I shall now go; and you may tell Jean de Novelompont that Rosaure de St. Vidal entirely approves of his chivalrous adventure in all its details, and—hopes he will soon make his testamentary dispositions.”

“Would you not like to tell him yourself?” said Joan. “He will soon be here.”

“No, no!” said Rosaure, blushing very

much, "I particularly want to avoid seeing him. You may think we are friends, but we are the bitterest of enemies. I came from Auvergne for the sole purpose of seeing you, and am going to return thither immediately. You may give him this if you like," and she kissed her.

"I most certainly shall not," said Joan, "so you may take it back again." And she kissed the pretty young lady.

"All the better," said Rosaure, laughing, and dropping her thick veil, as she followed Louis de Contes, who had a broad smile on his face.

The court now returned to Chinon; and the king's earliest step was to appoint Joan the regular household of a lady of distinction. Her squire was to be the Sire d'Aulon, a man of bravery and probity, who had served under Dunois; a second page was found for her

in Louis's brother Raymond : her two heralds were named Guyenne and Ambeville. Her chaplain, to her great joy, was Father Pasquerel. Besides these, she had a *dame de compagnie*, a *maître d'hôtel*, and inferior servants.

The Duke D'Alençon started for Blois to collect the troops that were to escort provisions to Orleans. But where was the money to come from ?

Charles's good-natured face assumed a look of deep thought. "I must borrow again," said he at length, "of Jacques Cœur." And who was Jacques Cœur ?

Jacques Cœur deserves what Southey used to call "an inter-chapter."

## CHAPTER XIII.

IN those days when ermine, sable, minever, and other furs were the coveted distinctions of rank as well as wealth, the furriers carried on a thriving trade. Jacques Cœur, whose father's fortune had been made in this way, was himself quite a merchant prince at Bourges. His ships covered the seas, and sailed all over the known world. Three hundred factors in his employ exchanged the wares and produce of France for the valuable skins of other countries.

Jacques Cœur grew enormously rich, and his spirit was as generous as his fortune. On one occasion, he lent the king two hundred

thousand gold crowns, to pay off the disorderly Free Companies. In 1428, the year with which this story commenced, Charles the Seventh had made him master of the mint at Bourges; then he made him his treasurer, and afterwards master of the mint at Paris. To be the king's treasurer, indeed, was more honour than profit, for his finances were so low that Jacques Cœur's predecessor in this office, Renault de Bouligny, said, "Tant de la pécune du roi que de la mienne, il n'y avait pas en tout, chez moi, que quatre écus."\* To repay him with barren honours, the king ennobled Jacques Cœur, and made him governor of Touraine: more than

\* "Les dépenses de sa maison étaient réduites au plus exact nécessaire. Il vivait comme le plus simple de ses serviteurs. Un jour que Saintraille et La Hire vinrent le voir, il ne put, dit on, leur donner pour tout régal, à leur repas, que deux poulets et une queue de mouton."—*Baran'e.*

this, he made him his friend, his adviser, his intimate companion, the depositary of his secrets ; and certainly Charles showed his sense in the selection of his confidant. He entrusted to him the conduct of difficult diplomatic negotiations—most likely he took his opinion about Joan ; he made him Seigneur and Baron of St. Fargeau, of Menetou-Salon, of Marmagne, of Maubranches. At all these places, Jacques Cœur built splendid palaces and castles. He built himself two palaces in Paris—one where now stands the Palais Royal, the other in the Rue de l'Homme armé. At Marseilles, at Montpellier, at Sançerre, he built him other palaces. He built the sacristy of the cathedral at Bourges, and annexed to it a magnificent chapel.\*

\* See Miss Costello's "Pilgrimage to Auvergne," which I have consulted throughout.

But the greatest wonder of all was the house he built himself in Bourges; it was like a dream. We cannot invent such things now. If we were to mix together fortress, and pavilion, and country-mansion, and town-hall, and build cellars, range upon range, on old Roman ramparts, and raise strange-shaped towers of all shapes and sizes, and put a strip of a highly ornamented palace next to a slice of a grim, old fortalice; and set doors, and courts, and staircases, and balconies where nobody would expect them; and encrust the whole with the most delicate traceries, and quaint mottoes on banderols; *flamboyants*, ornaments, inscriptions, and enigmas; and carve life-like figures of the master and mistress in their quaint costumes on the grand stairs, and set figures, life-size, of a man and woman servant, looking eagerly out of niches near the doorway up and down the street for

their master,—we should only make a j and a failure; we should not achieve a success like Jacques Cœur.

The man must have had an imagination he could, at will, let run riot or control the severest bounds. Round the balustrade of his balconies was entwined a scroll phatically inscribed, “A vaillant cœur impossible,” which in his case, seemed on simple truth. His emblem the heart gether with the pilgrim-shell of his St. Jacques, found place in almost every ration, and seemed like setting to it *J. Cœur his mark.* In the heart of his m was a perfect gem of a chapel, extremely and exquisitely elaborated. Two niches jecting from it into the street, held equ statues—one of the king, the other of h mounted on a mule *shod the reverse* whatever that might mean!

The house is a labyrinth, not of passages that lead to nothing, but that lead to what you would least expect. In the middle of the dining-hall floor, just where it would be concealed by the table, a large stone lifts up and discovers a hiding-place. A long, mysterious passage leads to a distant street. Over various doors, entablatures represent the destination of the chamber within : thus, over the reception room, a page is portrayed, ushering in guests ; over the chapel door, a man is ringing a bell, and the host is being carried ; over the kitchen, people are busy cooking. Over other doors, trees are sculptured ; over others, barrels, coils of rope, piles of merchandise.

It would take too long to repeat all the exquisite little bits of fancy and imagination expressed at every turn in wood and stone—the bas-reliefs, statuettes in niches, spiral staircases concealed in walls, vaulted

ceilings in cupboards, courses of lace-like foliage, doors embossed with elaborate carving.

A small room, known as Jacques Cœur's study, has a closet opening from it, full of enigmas to this day. It is covered with the most curious bas-reliefs, apparently relating to his own history. He is to be seen in the different tableaux, in his quaint hood, furred gown, and gold chain; and royal secrets seem enfolded in the mystery. In one group Jacques Cœur is seen approaching a female, reclining beneath a tree, whose hand is raised as if to remove a crown from her head. A man with a crowned head, and a face full of anxiety, looks from behind a tree in the background. In the opposite direction, they are watched by a grinning fool, with cap and bells. The mottoes, "En bouche close n'entre mouche!" and "Dire, faire, taire!" are introduced among the foliage. What may they mean?

Charles, Duke of Lorraine, dying in 1430, a fierce contest for the succession to his duchy ensued between René of Anjou, Duke of Barr, Queen Yolante's son, who had married the duke's daughter, and her cousin, the Count of Vaudemont. René was wounded and taken prisoner by the Burgundians, who were of De Vaudemont's party, and the Duke of Burgundy consigned him to imprisonment at the top of a high tower, still to be seen at Dijon, where he amused himself as well as he could, with music, poetry, and painting on glass.\* His wife, the Duchess Isabella,

\* It was this exertion of his talents, says Miss Strickland, that finally terminated his captivity, for Philip the Good was so much pleased with the sight of his own portrait, painted on glass by his interesting prisoner, that he clasped him in his arms, and after expressing the greatest admiration for his talents, offered to mediate with Antoine de Vaudemont for his liberation.

presented herself, a weeping suppliant, before the king, with the little Margaret of Anjou in her arms, and her other children led by her maid of honour, the beautiful Agnes Sorel. Words failed the poor duchess, and, turning to Agnes, she bade her plead her cause for her, which she did with such eloquence and grace that Charles loved her from that moment. At this time she was a high-minded and pure-hearted girl, and she sought to use her influence with the king to the advantage of his kingdom by urging him to

“Shun delights, and spurn inglorious days,”

though it is to be feared that, in the end, he did her more harm than she did him good. His queen, however, showed her great kindness at first, and perhaps liked her very much, till she found Charles liked her too much.

Now, was Charles infatuated enough to wish to set his wife aside, that he might marry Agnes? and did he get Jacques Cœur to suggest it to Mary of Anjou? May not his doing so be typified in the garden scene? May not the queen be contemplating the removal of her crown, while the king, concealed, anxiously listens to what passes, and the project is marred by some spoil-sport, not very flatteringly represented as a fool?

At all events, Jacques Cœur, after attaining inconceivable prosperity, lost court favour through the false imputation of consenting to the death, by poison, of Agnes Sorel.\* It

\* A specimen of the stinging things she could say is preserved. She told Charles an astrologer had forewarned her that she should win the affections of the greatest king in the world. "But," said she, "that cannot be you, since you let the English hold the best part of your kingdom."

happened twenty years after the siege of Orleans, and probably proceeded from natural causes; but his enemies were eager to ruin him with the king. He had been sent on a splendid embassy to compliment the Pope on his accession; had, at his own expense, victualled a castle and town holding out for King Charles against the Genoese; and he returned, to be maligned, persecuted, and ruined. His goods were declared forfeit to the crown, and he was cast into prison till he could pay a fine of a hundred thousand gold crowns.

He escaped from prison. With infinite danger and difficulty, he reached Rome. There, conferring with a faithful factor, he managed to pay the fine, to the infinite chagrin of his enemies. There was a revision of his trial; his accusers were declared perjured, and himself innocent. His sentence was reversed.

But, in the meanwhile, the fine old man, who had passed onward to the island of Cyprus, had died there of a broken heart.

This is anticipating events. Only it affords a curious illustration of the times; and one would not willingly write of Charles the Seventh, and yet leave the page unilluminated by the name of Jacques Cœur.

## CHAPTER XIV.

REAT wailing was in Domremy when the letter arrived, which Joan sent her parents by Durand Laxart, telling them she was on the point of commencing her journey. Zabillet did nothing but cry all the evening ; and as for Jacques, though he did not say much, he fell sick, and kept his bed two days. Jeannot trudged over to Vaucouleurs, to inquire if the governor had heard any news of the travellers, which Sir Robert resented, saying, how could he have had news of them, when they would be at least ten or twelve days on the road, and he did not even know which road they had taken. He bade him begone, for a saucy troublesome knave as he was, and follow his plough.

So Jeannot went home with a bee in his bonnet ; and when he reached two cross-roads, it was borne in upon him very forcibly that he ought to have stuck to Joan, and not let her go wandering about by herself, and that it would be better to hie after her now than not at all. So he turned his back on his friends and relations, and walked about five miles, hoping he was all that the nearer to Chinon, when, happening to come to a man of whom he could ask his way, he found he was completely on the wrong tack. So being by this time tired, and very hungry, he made no more ado, but went straight home, and said nothing of his enterprise.

The next to start off was Jacquemin, who, taking advantage of a market, went off on Dagobert, pretending, the villain, he was going to sell chaff, which, indeed, he did, but afterwards he started off right away across the

country. But Dagobert, feeling this to be without parental instructions, heroically ran a thorn into his foot, and made it an excuse for such desperate limping, that Jacquemin thought it best, all things considered, to go home.

Thirdly, Pierre went off, and he, poor boy, was the only one who was found out, and brought home in disgrace, and kept on bread and water three days. As for Jacques, his intentions remained buried in his own bosom, poor old man; but certain it is that Zabillet made up a small bundle more than once, determined that, come what might, she must go and look after her girl.

She was just thinking she could bear it no longer, when Durand Laxart, looking care-worn and yet thankful, came over to say the governor had sent to tell him the travellers had been heard of, and were doing well: they had crossed the Loire at Gien.

Tears of pleasure sprang to the eyes of the cottagers at this welcome intelligence, and Joan was remembered with additional fervour that night in their prayers.

Then came those two friars-minors, prowling and peering about, under pretence of exhibiting some very choice relics to the faithful,—filings of St. Paul's chain, and such like; but, in reality, to pick up the common talk of the place about Joan. There was no scandal to be raked up; not so much as a perverse or idle word. She had always been good, and honest, and kind; had gone to church often, carried candles to St. Mary of Belmont's little chapel, by the old hermitage; danced and sung with her young companions under the Fairies' Tree; would nurse sick people and young children, and give of her little to the poor.

The three godmothers were among these

witnesses, and they got out of the friars that Joan was being examined at Poitiers.

The friars disappeared ; but when Beatrice, with very round eyes, hastened to tell Zabillet what they had said, and she had said, and they had said again,—poor Zabillet became very uneasy at the idea of this examination, whatever it was, and took it very unkindly of Beatrice and the two Johannas that they had not let her confront the friars, and sift them well. She sent her sons to look after them, but they could not find them.

Zabillet was turning in her troubled mind what to do next, when the village curate came in to her, smiling, and said, “ I bring you a letter from your daughter.” The poor woman clasped her hands, unable to speak, and signing him to sit down, ran out before the house and made a shrill cry, that could be heard in the fields, which soon brought her husband and

sons, hastening in without any ceremony or order. Haumette also came running up, followed, more slowly, by Beatrice.

“Here’s news of our dear girl!” cried Zabillet, in delight. “Be quiet, all of you, and his reverence will read it.”

“‘Dear and honoured parents,’ ” began he.

“Aye, aye! that’s Joan, every word,” said Zabillet, under her breath.

“Hist, mother!” said Jacques, giving her a nudge.

The curate went on without any more interruption till he came to “I have seen the king,” on which he raised his eyes from the letter, and looked at them all round. Jacques said “Aye, aye?” softly and slowly, as if weighing it in his mind; while Pierre threw his cap up and caught it again, and Haumette clasped her hands and looked joyfully upwards. But Zabillet’s feelings

required to find vent in words, and she hastily exclaimed,—

“There, there! she has done it! My daughter Joan has seen the king, as she said she would, and may wear snouted shoes yet,—aye! and fastened with silver chains to her girdle; and a silken paltock, and a scalloped lirripipe about her neck, with long ends even down to her feet!”

“Daughter, daughter,” said the curate, “this triumph is quite unseemly. Thy head is turned with the maid’s promotion already, and yet it may lead to no conclusion.”

“Conclusion or no conclusion,” said Zabillet, in a lower key, “my girl has seen the king, and that’s what I said.”

“Suppose we hear the rest of the letter,” said Haumette, softly.

“It is but reason, you foolish people,” said the curate; and he went on reading, till he

came to where she spoke of returning to her spinning.

“ Returning to her spinning, indeed ! ” cried Zabillet. “ No, no, you may depend on it she’ll not do that ! My Joan will be a gentlewoman, and hold up her head with any of them, in damask and cut-work, with the wide sleeves they call ‘ pokes,’ which in my mother’s time were called ‘ rogues’ receptacles,’ because they would hold whatever you put into them.”

The curate was in dudgeon ; but Jacques said, “ Nay, sir, nay ; you will bear with her. The news has got into her head, like new wine.” So the curate was appeased, and went on till he came to her asking for her brothers.

Pierre cut a caper at this, and Jeannot looked full of joy ; but their parents were full of objections. The curate proceeded, and

again came to "Do not fail to send Pierre;" on which he clapped his hands.

"Boy! hold your peace!" said his father, giving him a rap on the head. So the curate concluded the letter, which ended with "Mind you send Pierre."

"There!" said Pierre, snapping his fingers with joy. "She has said it three times."

"Are you sure, sir, you have read the name right?" said Zabillet. "May it not be Jacquemin or Jeannot?"

"Why, woman! one would suppose I could not read!" cried the curate. "And yet I have been thought to know *mumpsimus* from *sumpsimus*."

"And besides," said Jacquemin, with a sigh, "I don't want to go. I should feel awkward in kings' palaces, though I'm all very well among heifers and calves."

"That's right, my boy," said his father,

patting him on the back ; “you know your place and keep it ;” with which eulogium Jacquemin seemed gratified.

“As for me,” said Jeannot, pulling up his head, “my genius is for action ; I feel it.”

“At any rate, I must go,” said Pierre, “for she says so three times.”

“Since she has said so three times, I suppose there must be something in it,” observed Zabillet. “Does the church say so, your reverence ?”

“Why, in a case like this,” replied he, “I think it only argues pertinacity.”

“Joan never was an arguer in her life,” said Zabillet, “nor have I ever known her guilty of perspicacity ; but if the thing is to be, it is,—only we must have a little time to look about us, for the boys must have two shirts a-piece made.”

“Oh, mother !” interposed Pierre, “don’t

let that stand in the way ! I can go as I am till I get there, and then perhaps the king will give me some of his old ones."

" Peace, sirrah !" said Zabillet. " Do you think you are to appear before his Majesty like a beggar ? A fine opinion the queen's mother would have of me, if she came to look into your bundle ! I trust I know what is due to their Majesties ; and shall certainly look out some pieces and shape them for you before you stir from this roof."

" And I will sew and stitch them, mother," said Haumette, " for love of Joan."

" Thou wast always an obliging girl, Haumette," said Zabillet ; and Pierre patted her on the shoulder, and whispered, " Sew them with a hot needle and a burning thread, for I long to be off."

" You none of you seem to consider," said the curate, " that they who walk in slippery

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places are like to fall. Joan's path is beset with dangers, and she asks you for your prayers. Unless, therefore, you offer them, not perforce and mechanically, but from the very ground of your hearts, you will have yourselves to thank for any mischief that befalls her."

Having thus brought down their tone, he blessed them, and left the cottage.

## CHAPTER XV.

**T**O Joan's impatience, it now seemed that much valuable time was being wasted. Men and provisions were being collected at Blois, and she longed to accompany them to Orleans. She plied Heaven with prayer and fasting, and she plied the king with importunities for action.

About this time, a Flemish gentleman at Lyons, named Rotslaer, wrote thus to a friend in Brabant:—

“A young girl of eighteen, from Lorraine, is about the king, whom she tells that she will save Orleans and drive away the English; and she says they will wound her there with an

arrow, but not mortally ; and that the king will be crowned this summer at Rheims : besides many other things which the king keeps to himself. This girl daily mounts her horse, fully armed, with lance in rest, just like the king's other attendants ; and she fills all hearts with confidence."

This letter was dated April 22nd.

One day, returning from church, followed, as usual, by a great concourse of people, Joan espied Jeannot and Pierre awaiting her at her door, one looking quite red and the other quite pale with emotion. Immediately they were embracing and kissing one another.

"Joan ! O my sister ! can this be you ?" cried Jeannot. "I took you for a young knight, in this rich doublet ; and yet, thought I, 'tis the face of Joan. But how you are altered ! how improved ! "

"I hope to say as much of you in a little while, brothers," said Joan, "and you must not mind the breaking in."

"Oh ! there's nothing I shall mind," cried Pierre.

"That's the right way to take it," said she. "We don't come here to amuse ourselves, but to save our country, and that is no such easy work, however we may make the best of it. I have a great deal to say to you both, but first I want to hear all about dear home ; and you shall talk and eat by turns, for I am sure you must be hungry."

So she told her page Louis, who was listening with all his might, and surveying the new comers with the most unabashed curiosity, to bid the *maître d'hôtel* send in some bread, meat, and wine ; "and then," said she, "you may stay away till I call for you." As soon as he was gone, she

clasped her brothers' hands—"Now," said she, "tell me about everybody and everything, down to the cat and magpie; but especially about father and mother."

The youths were not backward to obey these instructions, and talked eagerly till a plain, plentiful meal was served. She helped them herself, and said, "Now it is my time to talk, that you may eat."

"I am longing," said Jeannot, "to hear all you have to say."

"The king," said Joan, "who is a right noble gentleman, has been very good to me. He would not believe in me all at once, without a reason, and it was just and right that he should not; but the Lord sent him a sign, whereby he knew he might trust me. But then the parliament and church were to be satisfied; so I underwent a very rigorous examination. In the end, all their

doubts were removed, so then the king gave me rank as a knight-banneret, in token whereof, ye may see my white silken banner. Also he appointed me a household, and stables, and a table, as ye may see."

"Right good ones, too," said Pierre, joyously.

"It is not to be supposed," continued Joan, "that he does all this for nothing. He does it, not for value received, but for value to come. He expects I shall raise the siege of Orleans and crown him at Rheims, as I have said, and as I believe I shall do."

"But how, Joan?" said Jeannot, in perplexity.

"That is not for you to ask," replied she. "Rest content, and implicitly obey my instructions."

"I'm sure I will for one," said Pierre, very anxiously.

"And I for another," said Jeannot. "What shall we begin with?"

"Well," said she, smiling, "you must begin with holding up your heads and not being so round-shouldered. (They both pulled themselves up.) Look about you, and you will see how the men here carry themselves. They are not a whit better-looking than you, but they have been drilled, and are skilled in all manly exercises. So must you be, if you would take place among them, for you have nothing else to look to. In birth, you are lower than any of them; but you are my brothers, and that will make them respect you, if they see you respect yourselves—not else. They know I fear God and honour the king. They see I eat sparingly, and scarcely touch wine; they never hear a light or vain word from my lips. They will look for the like 'haviour in you."

Her brothers' faces grew rather long ; for the responsibilities of their position had not before dawned upon them.

"So you must behave as if the eyes of all France were upon you," said she ; "and what is more, as if the eye of God was ever upon you—which it is. And now, dear brothers, you shall have no more preaching, and I will help you to some of this pie."

Pierre had been casting sidelong glances at it for some time, but he now partook of it with chastened moderation, and even said "No, thank you," when Joan offered him a second helping.

"And now," said she, "I will present you to my squire and to my two pages. The Sire d'Aulon is a gentleman to be respected as well as loved. I consider it very condescending of him to be my squire, and you must always treat him with reverence. I would not advise either

of you, as a general rule, to talk too much or too loud, till you see how others talk and behave. That will give you leisure for observation. I very much regret, myself, that we are losing so much time here ; but for you it will be a good thing, because it will give you time to learn something of your new duties, before you are called into action. My two pages will be your chief companions, Pierre. They are of good birth, and, on the whole, are nice boys ; but they may try to lead you into mischief, and if they do, all I can say is, I shall hand you all three over to the Sire d'Aulon, who will not be very scrupulous in your punishment.”

Pierre winced a little at this, and just at that moment the formidable Sire entered and said—  
“ Maiden, Queen Yolante has sent for you.”

“ I attend her grace this instant,” said Joan ; “ and in the meanwhile, D’Aulon, you will direct my brothers to some occupation.

His Majesty has promised, as you know, that Jeannot, the eldest, shall be a man-at-arms; as for Pierre, he must be a supernumerary page."

"I think the young gentleman cannot then be more fitly employed," said the Sire d'Aulon, "than in doing what I have already set Raymond de Contes at, and which may be called the page's\* first introduction to chivalry, namely, to tilt at a stout stake, with a staff first, and afterwards with an old sword or hatchet."

"There can be no better practice for him," said Joan; "he may have the sword the governor of Vaucouleurs gave me, unless you can find him a worse."

"If you will follow me, young men," said

\* I use the word page as most familiar, but, in fact, *damoiseau* or *valet* were the terms used for it till the time of Philip de Comines.

the squire, “I will but attend my lady to the castle, and will then find you good employment.”

The king was just then playing chess with the Duchess d’Alençon, and at the same time listening to one of the envoys from Orleans.

“Now, what is it, man?” he was saying, and at the same time holding a piece suspended between his fingers. “Nothing disagreeable, I hope? Now, don’t let it be anything disagreeable!”

The envoy looked crestfallen, and replied—  
“Then, sire, I know not what to say.”

Charles moved his piece, and then, turning round upon him, said quickly—“What! is Orleans lost?”

“No, sire,” replied the envoy, dejectedly; “but it cannot possibly hold out many days longer unless succours are soon sent.”

"Don't move that knight," said Charles, hastily to the duchess. "I've lost my bishop owing to this fellow's talking. Well, my man, you say you want succours. It's very easy to say so, but who is to send them?"

"We had hoped your Majesty——"

"Aye, aye! you hope my Majesty——. My Majesty has very little peace or quiet day or night, what with your hopes one minute and your fears the next. What! you are short of provisions, hey?"

"And of men, your Majesty."

"The fewer the mouths to feed, my good fellow! Now, how much money do you suppose there is in the privy purse? Just four crowns! That's all I have to swear by. Duchess, you have puzzled me."

"Had we not better suspend the game, your Majesty?"

"This fellow's puzzle is worse than the

other. My good friend, you think I am inattentive to you. Not in the least. Julius Cæsar could do two things at once, and so can I."

The envoy (he was Jamet de Tilly) looked as if he thought Charles the Seventh was not Julius Cæsar.

"Sire, the governor desired me to press upon you very movingly the distress of the town. Men's spirits faint when their bodies are famishing : they may die behind their walls, but they can scarce defend them. A seasonable excitement, such as the news that your Majesty was coming in person——"

"Why, the Maid is coming in person, and is not she enough ? The Maid, with nearly six thousand men, and a noble supply of provisions ! "

"Ah!" said the envoy, earnestly, "if it were not for these delays——"

"There shall be no more, my dear fellow; the Maid shall start for Blois to-morrow."

"May God in heaven bless your Majesty!" said the poor envoy, flushing with pleasure.

"Yes, yes," said Charles, rising from the chess-board. "Duchess, I give you the game,—I should have won it but for this worry. The Maid, as I say, shall start to-morrow; and when I say it, I mean it."

The joyful news of the king's intentions quickly spread, and all was joyous preparation. Jamet de Tilly, before he and his fellow-envoy departed, had an interview with Joan, who asked him innumerable questions, and was not satisfied till he had enabled her to form a distinct picture of Orleans in her mind's eye. He spoke of the two great towers of its cathedral, soaring above the walls, and forming a landmark for miles; and of the great, yawning chasm in the bridge that spanned the Loire, on one side of which

rose the famous English bastion called Les Tournelles. He said that though, indeed, the English had encircled the northern side of the city with their forts, yet its circumference was such that there were great gaps between them, through which succours could pass, and that the forts were, in fact, isolated from one another, and required great resolution to hold ; so that he advised Joan to bring the succours on that side, rather than along the south bank, as she would then not have to cross the river under the fire of Sir William Gladsdale's soldiers on the south bank, and the besieged could sally out to meet her, and afford the enemy a diversion. Joan stored up all this. And he spoke of the devastation committed on both sides by the use of cannon, which had its first successful trial in this siege, and was regarded with immense terror ; and he described the breaches it had made in the city walls, and

how some of the English captains had made lodgments in the ruins, and their men, "in their usual manner," had raised huts of earth to shelter themselves from the arrows shot from the battlements. She seemed to comprehend the whole situation so well, that the envoy thought "this woman has intelligence and decision, and will needs do us good;" and when he took leave of her, she said,—

"Be of good cheer, and expect to see me soon in Orleans."

"I will, I will," said he, heartily; "and mind you come by the north bank."

And then she led a solemn procession to church; D'Aulon carrying her white banner. Once and again she addressed the populace, and said—"People all, remember ye to pray for us."

While De Metz was in the hurry of preparation for the journey, the boy Julian

brought him a letter, observing as he did so, that it had been left by a travel-soiled messenger from Auvergne. De Metz hastily desired him to stay the messenger, in case the letter required an answer, and then, after opening one envelope after another till he was provoked, came to—a single hair! In the innermost paper were the following lines:—

“ You asked me, centuries ago, for a lock of my hair, which I refused; but now that you are doing your devoir as a valiant son of France, I remember your wish and yet keep my word, for I think a single hair is quite enough for you. I send my good wishes to your lady-love, though she is not the one, if she is the other. I hope you will cut off the head of Glacidas.

“ ROSAURE DE ST. VIDAL.”

De Metz, with a furtive light in his eye, and a smile that curled the ends of his moustache, penned the following missive, and gave it in charge to the returning messenger:—

“ You are mistaken in thinking my love is no lady, for she is both one and the other; however, her name is not Joan. I thank you for the hair, which I think I have already lost” (that will make her savage, quoth he), “ and, in return, will leave you my heart, which you despised while I was alive, but may prize when I am dead. My page will take care you shall have it. I trust you will plant it in a flower-pot, and moisten it daily with your tears, which I shall prefer to your eating it with salt and pickles.

“ Your servant, but not slave,

“ JEAN DE NOVELOMPONT, DE METZ.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE little cavalcade did not start till the sun was well up, for they had to ride but twenty-five miles to Tours, and the king wished to see them off. That easy-going prince, attended by La Tremouille, and a few others, was early in the saddle, and saw the train file by him in the following order :—

The Sire d'Aulon, carrying the white banner unfurled to the wind.

Joan, in full panoply, with a white surcoat, such as we see in the vignettes to Wiffin's "Tasso," flowing in graceful folds over her plate armour.

Father Pasquerel on a mule.

De Poulengy and De Metz, well mounted  
and richly armed, with lances.

Two heralds.

The two brothers.

The two pages, or valets, to use the  
term.

The *maitre d'hôtel*, grooms, and De Poulengy's page.

In all, a very little party, as it struck the king, to save France.

"Take care a hawk does not fly off with the  
Maid!" said he, cheerfully. "What  
we all do then?"

"Have no fears for me, beau sire,"  
replied, with equal cheerfulness. "I shall  
be preserved, and preserve others."

"Heaven grant it," muttered he, as she  
off. "Surely something ought to turn  
me, considering what a run of ill luck I  
had; for I impute my misfortunes to w

forgive others their trespasses and shortcomings, never bear malice, and love to see everybody comfortable. Is not that my character, De la Tremouille?"

When the little party had passed out of sight, the order of march changed a little. D'Aulon furled the banner, as the wind made it troublesome, and the two Sires rode up close enough to join in conversation. Father Pasquerel was dilating on the miseries occasioned by the overflowing of the Loire, notwithstanding the strong dykes built on its northern side to protect the valley.

As soon as the snow began to melt on the mountains in which the river rises, it began to inundate the country, sweeping away whole villages, and detached cottages, with all their inhabitants. Trees, haystacks, horses, cattle, infants peacefully sleeping in their cradles, were indiscriminately borne down the stream,

while here and there some aged person was heard piteously calling for help, from some housetop, or the upper branches of a firmly-rooted tree.

While the principal persons of the cavalcade were discoursing on this subject, Pierre, after wistfully eyeing the two boy pages behind him, one of whom at length made him a signal of invitation, dropped behind to them, leaving Jeannot to amble on by himself. Jeannot had quite enough to do to keep himself together, finding himself on a steady enough horse, and being inducted into a thick, leathern jack, over which he wore an iron breastplate, and on his head a morion, or open helmet, without vizor or beaver. He was armed with a lance and a sword, and, as he had not had time to assay either, it troubled him much to think how he should handle them, and he devoutly hoped that when

the first brush with the enemy occurred, every one would be so occupied with their own part in the engagement, as to take no note of his deficiencies. Meantime, he made a soldierly appearance enough, and nobody guessed what inward misgivings were assaulting the poor fellow.

Louis de Contes, who as yet had hardly exchanged a sentence with Pierre, began by asking him how old he was; to which he, boy-like, replied, "Going on for fifteen."

"I should have thought you were more," said Louis, who was bantering. "Should not you, Raymond?"

"Oh, certainly," said Raymond; "I should have thought him at least sixteen."

"Well, I am surprised at that," said Pierre, artlessly, "for at home I have never been counted tall."

"Perhaps because your brothers are still

taller," said Raymond; "like strong Gyas and strong Cloanthus. Of course you know the allusion?"

"I cannot say that I do," said Pierre.

"Allow me to ask, if it is not impertinent," said Louis, with an air of extreme civility, "how do you spell your name?"

"I don't spell it at all," said Pierre.

"Nay, but how should I spell it?"

"Any way you like," said Pierre; "it's all the same to me."

"Surely that cannot be," said Louis, laughing, "because it makes all the difference whether you are noble or not."

"Oh, then, I can tell you in one word," said Pierre. "I am not."

"It appears to me," said Raymond, with affected gravity, "but I may be mistaken, that you do not happen to know how to read."

"You are quite right; I do not," said Pierre. "But," added he, "I dare say I should if I were taught."

This reply threw his companions into such fits of laughter that some of their elders looked round at them; on which they were instantly as grave as judges.

Pierre, emboldened by this, said, "Will you teach me?"

"That would be rather too much to undertake," said Raymond, "and would abstract my thoughts too much from more important duties. I think it would be more in Father Pasquerel's line; you had better ask him."

"Oh yes, I will," said Pierre, "for he looks very good-natured."

"I wonder, though," said Louis, "that when you lived at home, in that old castle of yours, the Sire d'Arc did not bid one of his chaplains to instruct you; but perhaps

you did not like to learn, and were allowed to have your own way, being the youngest."

"My father is no Sire, but only plain Jacques," replied Pierre; "and he does not live in a castle, but in a cottage."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Louis, affecting the utmost surprise. "And where, then, did you get your good manners!"

"Oh! they are cheap in my part of the country, though they mayn't be in yours," said Pierre, smiling; "I suppose you found them too dear, but I got mine for nothing."

"Blows are cheap, though, in my part of the country," said Louis; "and I'll give you as many of them for nothing as you like."

"Thank you, but I never take anything without paying for it," said Pierre; "and I would rather pay even too much than too little, to a gentleman like you."

"I'll remember that, next time I want a few marks," said Louis. "My father is noble, but poor."

"My father is neither noble nor rich," said Pierre; "but yet he is a good man for all that."

"And a good judge of horse-flesh too, no doubt," said Raymond.

"Of a draught horse, may be," said Pierre, "but not of a fine war-horse like that my sister rides. Marry, I should like him to see her now!"

"Perhaps you would like him to see *you* now?" said Louis.

"Well, it seems a long while since I left home," said Pierre innocently, "and I should like to see him and for him to see me."

"Home-sick?" said Raymond.

"Not in the least," said Pierre, stoutly.

"Ah!" said Louis, "such a home as I

have left! My father has a splendid old castle in Auvergne that has been in the family for several thousand years: the walls are draped with cobwebs and our ancestors' achievements. We have a dungeon three hundred feet beneath the level of the sea, choke full of dead men's bones."

"Indeed?" said Pierre, who saw no reason for disbelieving him; "then it's a good thing there's no room for more."

"Why so?"

"Because I should think there must have been a great deal of indiscriminate slaughter."

Here again the pages went into fits of laughter.

"You stoop too much," said Louis, recovering himself; "a warrior should be as straight as his lance."

Pierre knew this to be true, and therefore drew himself up immediately.

"I know I should make allowances for you," pursued Louis. "Following a plough, dragging a harrow, drilling little holes in the ground, and dropping beans into them, of course tend to curve the shoulders. No offence, I hope?"

"None at all," said Pierre. "Pray was any intended?"

His companions laughed; and Raymond then said—

"See, we are coming to some water. Now, mind you are not unseated."

Pierre forded the river very well; and then said to Louis—

"Suppose, instead of mocking me, you were to tell me all you know of gallant knights and feats of arms."

"With all my heart," said Louis. "The only difficulty will be to stop me, when once I have begun. What shall I start with?"

“That old castle of your father’s, that has been in the family thousands of years.”

“Thousands? hundreds!”

“Indeed you said thousands.”

“Ah, my boy, that castle is high, high up, quite in the clouds. My poor old father is in heaven!”

“Oh!—and the dungeon?”

“The dungeon is his grave. Mother Earth, you will allow, is choke full of bones.”

“Nay, then, there’s an end,” said Pierre, disappointed.

“On the contrary, I have not yet even made a beginning. Did not you want to know the institution and whole course of knight-errantry?”

“One law of knighthood is not to tell lies,” said Pierre.

“Do you mean that I have done so, Master Malapert?”

"Hallo!" said Raymond, on the other side, "do you know you are insulting my brother-in-arms, whom I am bound to rescue, defend, and uphold on all occasions?"

"Whether brother-in-arms or baby-in-arms," said Pierre, stoutly, "he ought not to say thousands for hundreds."

"A baby, indeed!" said Louis. "Why, I have a lady-love, and that's more than you can say."

"Do tell me who she is," said Pierre, with interest.

"Will you be secret?"

"Oh, yes!"

"The noble lady, Joan Darc."

"What! my sister? Why, she is a great deal older than you!"

"I prefer it. She is the liege lady of my affections. And you?"

"Oh! I've no liege lady."

“Fie! you must have.”

“Then I’ll have my sister.”

“Why, that is what little Jean de Saintré said to the Dame des Belles Cousines!”

“Well, and will not she do as well as any other?”

“Yes, yes; we will stand by her to the death!”

And thus the boys prattled among themselves while Jeannot jogged soberly before them; and the Maid, the friar, the two gentlemen of Barr, and the squire, held pleasant discourse in front. And thus they journeyed onward till they reached the pleasant river Loire, and saw heavy barges sailing up stream with a favouring wind, freighted with all manner of provisions.

“Ah,” sighed the friar, “would that those barges were bearing corn and wine to the beleaguered city! But they will only, at the

farthest, reach Blois. And now, maiden, behold the distant towers of Tours Cathedral! It was erected by St. Ludovic on the site of a house given to him by Cornelius the centurion."

Joan heard and believed. And soon they were threading the tortuous streets of the old town, preceded by the white banner, and attended by the chief magistrates and a tumultuous concourse of citizens.

## CHAPTER XVII.

IT is fine to enter an old fortified town at dusk, when its embattled walls, frowning towers, ponderous gateways, and irregular streets lie in deep shadow, broken here and there by red fire-light or yellow lamp-light flickering through the quaint casements of old toppling houses, or the passing flare of a flambeau or lantern, or the twinkling of some miserable little oil lamp before a shrine, or at an apple-woman's stall. Dark figures, mysteriously draped, pass hither and thither on unknown errands; we regard them with a pleasing awe, and wonder what have been their antecedents. When to these sights we

add the accompanying sounds—the grating of wheels, the patter of many feet, the hum of a thousand voices, boys whooping to one another through lanes and alleys, here and there a baby crying, a cat mewing, a guitar or violin playing, a beggar whining, a sudden chorus of street singers, a sudden glimpse inside a lighted church, full of people praying —the scene becomes one of enchantment.

Perhaps some one who reads these pages may have dined at the *table d'hôte* of some old inn on the Rhine, when the Holy Coat was exhibited at Treves, and may have seen guests, waiters, chamber-maids, ostlers, stable-boys, everybody, suddenly rise from whatever they were about, and rush to doors and windows. A procession of pilgrims has entered the square; a priest of some distant village is leading his parishioners to Treves. They are dirty, travel-stained, and weary; they

chant an inharmonious hymn as they pass; every head is uncovered; every one looks on with a strange kind of fascination, and wishes them good speed.

Something like this was the commotion excited in Tours by the entry of Joan and her little band. She was the wonder of the hour: women looked at her with tearful eyes, and men regarded her with curiosity and reverence as she passed onward to the cathedral. There was no lack of attendance that evening at vespers.

Afterwards, the grey-haired old provost, in furred gown and gold chain, feasted her and her companions with his best. But Joan reminded him it was a fast day, and would only eat a small piece of sweet marchpane. It behoved her, she said, to besiege and propitiate Heaven with much prayer and fasting. Then said the provost wonderingly to her—

“Maid, ye are full young to undertake this journey to a camp of rough men. Hast thou no mother, aunt, nor woman of mature years to afford thee countenance?”

Joan replied, “My Lord will afford me countenance. I go to save France; and sure there be no sons of France who would harm or hinder me?”

“Ah!” said the provost, shaking his grey head, “I wish all sons of France were as ye think; but too certain it is that in the camp at Blois are many, both men and women, who lead ill lives.”

Joan said, “Women have no business there at all; and if I find any such there as you say, I shall turn them out.”

The provost, raising his eyebrows a little, and turning to the Sire d’Aulon, said, in a low voice, “Are you wise to take her on with you? can good come of it, think ye?”

"What know I?" replied D'Aulon, in the same tone; "I can but obey the king, and trust in God."

"He who does so is wise," said the provost. "Then, maiden, since thou wilt neither eat nor drink, except what might suffice a sparrow, let my good wife lead thee to her withdrawing-room, which may please thee better than to look on while I care for more robust appetites."

The old lady, who wore fur round her close-fitting, black robe and cap, and who looked like a Dutch burgomaster's wife stepped out of her picture-frame, here rose, and taking Joan's hand in hers, led her out of the hall. And we, too, will leave the provost and his guests to their wine. By Joan's direction, Father Pasquerel called off the three boys to bed.

It was one of the first really warm days of the season when they started next morning for

Blois. The distance was thirty English miles. Light, fleecy clouds were gently chased overhead by the soft air; the fields were faintly tinted with the tender green of the sprouting corn, and birds were twittering in every thicket. As they pricked over the plain, clear, trembling lustres flashing from their polished steel, they seemed bent on some fair tourney or joust rather than on a forlorn hope. But Joan and her companions were full of gravity.

"It appears then, father," said she, "from what you tell us, that national sins have again and again been attended with national punishment, and that when the people of God have from time to time, as with one accord, humbled themselves before Him and pleaded for His mercy, He has been attent unto their prayer, and given them deliverance from their enemies."

"Time would fail me if I tried to enumerate to you all the instances of it, daughter," said Father Pasquerel.

"Time, however, is not wanting at this moment," said Joan ; "and how could it be better filled?"

"Well, then," said he, "to cite but a few examples. The people of God, having inter-married with idolatrous nations in the days of the Judges, were given over into the hands of the Moabites, who oppressed them even worse than the English and Burgundians oppress us. On their humiliating themselves one and all before the Lord, however, it pleased Him to deliver them by the hand of a great captain named Othniel ; and the land had rest forty years. Again the people did evil, and again they were given over to their enemies ; again they cried with one voice unto the Lord, and He delivered them by the hand of a great

captain named Ehud. That time the land had rest eighty years. We may suppose that generation to have died off. The next did no better than their fathers had done; they provoked the Lord, and He gave them over into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. Again they wept and lamented themselves. This time, daughter, their deliverer *was a woman!* Her name was Deborah: she dwelt under a great tree—.”

“Like the Fairies’ Tree,” cried Joan.

“And she spoke to the chief captain (as you might to De Boussac), and bade him march with ten thousand men to Mount Tabor, and pour down upon the king’s host, who were assembled beside the brook Kishon in great multitude, adding ‘the Lord will deliver them into thine hand.’ This pusillanimous general, however, refused to go unless she went with him, on which she rather contemptuously

replied, ‘I will surely go with thee ; notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour, for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of *a woman.*’”

“Served him right,” said De Metz.

“I dare say he thought,” pursued the friar, “that the woman spoken of was herself; it was not so, however. Barak, with Deborah at his elbow, went up to Mount Tabor ; and then she spoke smartly to him (as you might to De Boussac) and said, ‘Up ! for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand ! *is not the Lord gone out before thee ?*’ (Mark those remarkable words, daughter.) So Barak and his infantry rushed down from the heights and swept over the plain, as the Loire does when the snow has melted, completely overwhelming the enemy’s cavalry, and Sisera especially who had piqued himself so much on his war-

chariots, actually found them *of no use at all*, and leaped out of his own, and took to his heels like a hare with the hounds after it!"

"Famous!" cried De Poulengey.

"And the woman?" inquired Joan.

"The defeated general," pursued Father Pasquerel, "fled ever so far away, till he got to a wild, quiet sort of place, where was the tent of a poor, peaceable shepherd. The man was not at home, but his wife was; and Sisera, believing her friendly to him, asked her for shelter and concealment. She knew him well enough, and hated him; so, when he asked her for a little water, she gave him some milk, and made believe that she wished him well, and made up a bed for him; but directly he was asleep, she takes hammer and nail and strikes the nail right through his head!—with such a will as to pin him to the ground!"

"Ah! that was treacherous," was Joan's comment. D'Aulon's was, "The nail must have been a long one."

"It was one of the long nails with which the tent was pegged to the ground," said the friar. "And now, tell me, have I given examples enow that the Lord's hand is not slack to save when men call upon Him for deliverance? Time would fail me to tell of His people under their kings—of David, and Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, and Josiah. Be assured, however, that the Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save."

"Would," cried Joan, "that I might play the part of Deborah anew."

"Aye, but the camp and nation must be purified of its sins first," said Father Pasquerel; "our Lord says, 'it is of no use to call me Lord, Lord, if ye do not the thing that I say.'"

"Clearly not," observed De Poulengey.

"There is," pursued Father Pasquerel, who was himself an Augustine, "a mendicant friar of my order, called Brother Richard, lately returned from the Holy Land, who has had it revealed to him that marvellous things shall befall in the year of grace 1430; and another brother, named Bernard, predicts the immediate approach of the end of the world. His preaching has been blessed to the conversion of many souls in Italy, where his ministry lies; and as to Brother Richard, he is drawing multitudes of poor sinners to him at this moment, in Paris, where he preaches during Lent at St. Geneviève. His discourses, I am told, begin at five o'clock in the morning, and last till ten or eleven; and there are always five or six thousand persons present."\*

\* "Frère Richard vint à Paris au commencement d'Avril, 1429, et commença à prêcher le 16 du même

"For myself," said D'Aulon, "a long sermon, good or bad, invariably puts me to sleep—it is an infirmity I inherit from my father."

"Original sin is at the bottom of that infirmity," observed the friar; "we all of us inherit that from our first father, but we are not therefore held guiltless."

"That is what I never can precisely understand," said the squire. "Be so good as to explain it to me in few words."

While Father Pasquerel was complying with his request, much debate was going on at Blois concerning Joan's pretensions, and the reception that should be given her.

The pleasant city of Blois hangs on the

mois à Sainte Geneviève," &c. . . . "et commençoit son sermon environ cinq heures du matin, et duroit jusques entre dix et onze heures: et tousjours y avoit quelque cinq ou six mille personnes à son sermon."—*Procès*, i. 99.

side of a steep hill which bends towards the river Loire in the form of an amphitheatre. The river is spanned by a heavy, solid-looking bridge, and along its bank runs an agreeable promenade shaded by fine trees; while the outline of the town is broken and dignified by the many roofs and gables of its old château, and by the spires of its Gothic cathedral. The upper part of the city would be inaccessible but for continual flights of picturesque stairs.

In an old stone hall, containing little furniture except some heavy chairs and benches, round an old oaken table sat a group of King Charles's most noble captains: to wit, Mareschal de Boussac, Admiral de Culant, Captain La Hire, and the Sires De Retz and De Loré. Which of all these, think you, was the real, original Bluebeard of our nursery stories? It was Gilles de Laval, Sire de Retz, that

handsome young man, with the glossy blue-black beard and glittering black eyes. At the too early age of twenty, he had become possessor of enormous wealth, and had run into strange excess of riot, but had not thereby been debarred from attaining to high military distinction. Soon after this time, he was Mareschal of France; eleven years only afterwards, he was put to death, for alleged sorcery, at Nantes. He was accused of putting to death hundreds of young children; some said, to renew his youth by a bath of their blood;\* others, that he might write with it books of diabolical conjurations.

\* This cry was raised against Louis the Fifteenth, doubtless without reason in both cases. "With the love of metaphor," says Dr. Challice, "peculiar to the lower orders of the French, as of the Irish, they exclaimed—'The king bathes in our children's blood! his baths are our blood!'"—*Challice's "Secret Hist. of the Court of France under Louis the Fifteenth."* i. 294.

"Sirs," the Mareschal De Boussac was saying, "I have received advice from Chinon this morning, that the Maid slept at Tours last night, and is even now on her way to us."

"Who or what is the Maid," said the Admiral, scornfully, "that her coming should be of any moment to us? She does not supersede you in the command, I suppose?"\*

"That is as may be," returned De Boussac. "The king has given her a banner, and she seems to be coming, in some sort, as his delegate."

"As well one as the other of them, I think," said La Hire, bluntly. "The king's field

\* Non seulement le roi lui avait donné l'autorité, d'un général d'armée (*ordinationem circā factum guerræ*), "combien que le roy eust encores de bons et de suffisants capitaines pour deliberer du faiet de la guerre, si commandoit il qu'on ne fist riens sans appeler la Pucelle." —*Le Brun de Charmettes*, i. 433.

orders would do us no good, but his presence would animate the troops—this girl's interference is impertinent; but the men believe her to be inspired, and, therefore, will fight under her as if possessed."

"I am not going to resign my baton to her, though," said De Boussac, "so I hope she may not find herself in a false position."

"What matters it how the men's spirits are raised?" said La Hire. "Already many who had gone home are re-assuming their arms for their country's cause; they only wait for her to cheer and animate them."

"Animate them and welcome," said the Mareschal, "but to undertake anything in the nature of command will be simply ridiculous. I, for one, am not going to be led by a petticoat."

"She wears male attire," observed De Rets;

" with her hair flowing over it, I understand, tied by a string or something." \*

" What is her retinue ? " said the Admiral.

" Two or three lances," replied De Boussac, " a chaplain, a squire, two pages, and a *maître d'hôtel*."

" Her entry will be simple and unostentatious," said De Loré, ironically.

" That depends," said De Retz.

" Is she noble ? "

" I am not sure how her name is spelt. I rather think it is only Darc."

" Bertrand de Poulengey," observed DeLoré, " who escorted her across the country, is as true a son of chivalry as ever lived. He is one of the king's equerries of the stable."

" He wears her colours of course ? "

" White is her colour, I understand. She

\* See a monument at Orleans, constructed in 1458, when her appearance was fresh in the minds of many.

wears white armour, a white surcoat, and has a white banner."

"We must give her a good reception, at any rate," said De Boussac, "since the king so wills it. Good quarters and a good table. Who knows but that with this she may be content, as a good little girl should be, and leave us to do what is, after all, only men's work."

"Only," said La Hire, smiling a little, "we men have not been able to relieve Orleans."

"Nor will she, nor will she," returned the Marshal, quickly. "Notwithstanding all this foolery, nothing will be done. It is a grievous thing, sirs, but Orleans must fall!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THOUGH the chiefs had so little relish for her assistance, they were forced to yield some outward conformity to the spirit of the citizens, who were in a tumult of joy at the news of Joan's approach. When, therefore, she drew near to Blois, she saw them coming forth to meet her with every outward demonstration of respect, while the hearty, genuine cordiality of the multitude expressed itself in shouts that rent the air. As usual, her first object was the cathedral, whither she repaired, armed, but bareheaded, attended by an immense concourse of people. The citizens were forward to show their best

hospitality to her and her train; but her severe rule let her do little justice to their feast. She inquired, according to her wont, for some worthy dame of avouched respectability as her hostess, and was assured that she was to be the guest of the most honourable and esteemed lady in the town. She bade Father Pasquerel organise processions for the morrow, and sent one of her heralds to beg Mareschal de Boussac would come to speak to her without delay. He did so, accompanied by La Hire.

"Beau sire," said she, "you know my mission and my authority. I trust you are ready to escort the provisions to Orleans."

"All in good time, maiden," replied Mareschal de Boussac, lightly. "It is our intention so to do; but it will be no easy enterprise in the face of the English, flushed with recent success."

"It will be your turn now," replied she, "to be flushed with success; for you will go forward in the name of the Lord—and at once!"

De Boussac's colour rose; La Hire swore.

"Why do you take that holy name in vain," said Joan, looking firmly at him, "by which we hope to conquer? Is that your reverence for your Captain? You owe the God of Battles at least as much respect as you expect your men to show *you*!"

"Maid, I am corrected," said La Hire.

"Ah! but," said she, earnestly, "do not content yourself with merely abstaining from swearing when I am by; but altogether."

De Boussac burst out laughing. "Is my turn coming?" said he. "You may as well ask me to walk like a crab."

Joan, however, continued to look at La  
Hire.

"Will you?" said she.

"By my troth, Maid, I will," said he, abruptly. "You don't call *that* swearing, I suppose? It will be almost like talking Dutch, for I must learn a new language; howbeit, I will only swear by my baton."\*

De Boussac looked contemptuously; but Joan said, "God will bless you for it. And, I pray you, go to church. I did not see you there this evening."

All the men laughed here, and De Boussac said, "You are in for it now."

"Never mind," said La Hire, stoutly, "she is a good girl, I can see with half an eye, and I wish I were as sure of heaven."

"We must talk of earthly things now," observed De Boussac, with impatience; "and with respect to the convoy, it is im——"

\* Barante.

"Important that it should proceed without delay," said Joan, "for the citizens are weak with hunger."

"Rest content," said De Boussac; "the men of Orleans shall be succoured——"

"Yes; but at once," insisted Joan; "and along the northern bank."

"My dear child," interrupted De Boussac, with something of kindness in his tone, "what should you know of tactics? The Count de Dunois has expressly bidden us to follow the south bank. Leave these things to men who have studied them all their lives——"

"Only you have not relieved Orleans," she put in.

"That's a stale answer," said he, impatiently. "To proceed along the northern bank of the Loire would be highly dangerous, and we should inevitably be cut off. I have

'no right to throw away the lives of the king's subjects in that way, nor any mind to risk my own in what would be mere folly. Content yourself with animating us by your presence, and cheering the men onward, and we will proceed, fair and softly, along the southern bank, and through the province of Sologne, where the bastilles of the English are weaker and worse guarded."

"Nay, but," said Joan, "I will go with you along the north bank, or not at all."

"This is sheer obstinacy," said De Boussac, heating, "and shows nothing but wrong-headedness. You want to provoke me to throw down my baton, I suppose."

"No," said Joan, "I want you to carry succours to Orleans along the north bank. That is all."

"All? bless my soul!"

"My good girl——"interposed La Hire.

"Dear captain," said she to him, "do you believe me sent by Heaven or not?"

He was silent.

"I, Joan Darc, know nothing of the matter. I am simply sent as a messenger, to lead you to victory. If you do not believe in me, I have no more to say."

"Well, but I do believe in you," grumbled De Boussac; "at least the king does, which is to the same effect."

"And do not the soldiers?"

"Oh, yes——"

"Who put it into their hearts? May it not have been the Holy Spirit? May not the Lord have chastised the nation for its sins by these sad reverses, and may He not be willing and desirous to show mercy, if so be we will but yield us humbly and penitently to His guidance, though it be but by the hand of a little child?"

"Oh, if you are going to talk in that way——"

"Ah, fair sir, believe in Him as I do!"

"I wish *I* did," exclaimed La Hire, with an oath. "Oh, upon my honour, I didn't mean to swear!"

"Maid, you are very coaxing and very persuasive——" began the Marshal.

"No," said Joan, bluntly, "I scorn to be either."

"Ah, well; you must be tired with your journey. Pray, how did you leave his Majesty?"

"Very anxious that you should relieve Orleans. He expects it."

"I hope his expectations will be gratified. Meanwhile, we will relieve you of our presence; *that* will be a seasonable relief at any rate. So fair a lady must need to lay aside her armour——"

“Sir, I am no lady, nor yet fair, and I shall wear armour till Orleans is saved and the king crowned. Then I will go back to my sheep.”

“Little girl, you are brave,” said La Hire, admiringly.

“Ah!” said she, “I see you are going to be a good man; you will leave off swearing and go to church.”

“Oh, aye; and do you, my child, remember me in your prayers!”

“Certainly, sir, and the brave Marshal too. I have done so many times already. I have prayed for each of you by name, that God would cleanse your hearts and give you good desires.”

De Boussac here gave a kind of snort; and, bowing low, took his leave. La Hire paused for a moment.

“I shall see you in the morning,” said he.

“In church, then,” said Joan, “for that is

where I shall be ; and afterwards in the camp. Oh, sir ! I know you are loyal and brave. *Do* help to save our poor country ! ”

“ Why, that is what I live for ! ”

“ Aye, but it must be by means. One is to save Orleans ; another is, to cleanse the camp by making the soldiers purify their hearts like dying men.”

“ The——. Come, I *didn't* swear that time ! Give me credit for it, maiden ! You had better preach to them yourself, it is more in your line than mine ; and begin by telling them you have won over an old sinner like La Hire. Not that I am very old, neither ! Good night.”

He hastened after the Mareschal, who was striding towards his quarters.

“ What say you to this girl ? ” began he. “ There's a mighty air of inspiration about her.”

"Oh! she would talk one dead," said De Boussac. "That's the worst of people who have no manners."

"If she has no manners, it follows that she has not bad manners," observed La Hire; "and I do not see that manners, bad or good, have much to do with it."

"Only this, that she will not hear what is to be said on the other side, and, whatever may be alleged, passes it over and returns to the original thesis—that we must march at once, and along the north bank."

"How do you mean to put her off?" asked La Hire.

"Simply, by never minding her."

"That won't relieve Orleans, though, as she said."

"And as you said before her, my friend. I'm sick of that stale answer."

"I don't see what is to be done, though,"

said La Hire. The other made no reply, but walked on, his armour clanging at every step.

“What do you mean to do?” said La Hire.

The Mareschal replied—

“Lead her a dance  
All about France,  
Out of France into Spain,  
And then back again.”

La Hire laughed, but said, “I don’t think that will do.”

“I’ll try it, however,” said the Mareschal.  
“And now, will you sup with me?”

“Well, you know I live by rule; but the rule is, never to refuse a good invitation.”

So they both laughed, and turned into De Boussac’s lodging.

It may readily be supposed that there were in Blois swarms of ladies who were dying, as the saying is, to have a private view of Joan.

to look her well over, acquaint themselves with her voice, accent, forms of expression, and ask her a thousand irrelevant questions. I will not say they aspired to ask her to a “disjune,” more likely to spiced wine and comfits ; but at any rate they desired to show her the hospitality of the time and place, that they might in return have their curiosity and self-importance gratified. Nothing, however, was more out of Joan’s way than a series of small evening parties, or parties of any kind, by whatever old-fashioned name they might be called : her object was, with the aid of Father Pasquerel, to call all the city to repentance, and if honourable women not a few importuned her with their visits, to be instant with them, in season and out of season, that they should convert their husbands by their godly walk, not gadding from house to house, speaking *things which they ought not*, like tattlers and

busybodies, but stayers at home, busying themselves in good works, and continuing in prayer and supplication night and day. It may be supposed that admonitions such as these were as acceptable, in many instances, as a biting, north wind to a person with a bad cold ; and that sundry ladies with steeple head-dresses, or round tires like the moon, pronounced her a very set-up young person, vastly arrogant and disagreeable ; but yet there were others pricked to the heart, and infected by her enthusiasm, who fell into the processions formed by the Maid, her confessor, and all the priests of Blois, and perambulated the streets with them, chanting the seven penitential psalms. In addition to her banner, she had a standard, round which they rallied : it was painted with the crucifixion. As for the soldiers, Father Pasquerel preached among them as Savonarola might have done, awaken-

ing a sense of sin that was vehement while it lasted, expressing itself in groans, tears, and smiting the breast. La Hire himself, a soldier from the cradle, was scarcely ever heard to swear, and was not unfrequently to be seen in church.

De Boussac readily acceded to Joan's desire, that a letter should be written to the English chiefs before Orleans, summoning them to yield to King Charles all the cities they held in his realm. Instead of writing "restore to the king," however, his secretary wrote "restore to the Maid," which she afterwards complained of.

This letter was received with scorn and derision by the English captains, who returned for answer that they would burn the herald who brought it, as coming from a sorceress and witch. Notwithstanding this unknighthly threat, however, which was not put into execution, an uncomfortable feeling of dismay

and distrust arose in their minds as to her authority and mission ; and the soldiers, especially, being more ignorant and superstitious than their masters, were quick to believe that she was commissioned from on high, or leagued with the powers of darkness.

Meanwhile, De Boussac, loath to encounter the English, yet wearied by the pertinacity with which Joan urged him to advance, really practised the artifice he had proposed to La Hire ; and, announcing that all was ready for the march, started with some of his troops and provisions, crossed the Loire with the Maid, and yet had the art to persuade her they were keeping along the northern bank. La Hire's heart smote him for joining in the deceit ; and as De Poulengy and De Metz had not been of her council, they knew not she was in error.

For the greater part of three days therefore, they wandered up and down the dreary

wilderness of Sologne, than which it is impossible to conceive a district more arid, monotonous, and unproductive. Nothing met the eye but sand and furze, gravel-pits and lizards ; and the poor inhabitants seemed brutish and wretched. Joan passed the first night in her armour, in the open air, but it made her ill, and the next night they were obliged to supply a lodging for her. The priests of Blois, who had joined Father Pasquerel in this crusade, availed themselves to good purpose of these two days in preaching repentance to the soldiers. They led the way, singing *Veni Creator*, and on the second day administered the sacrament in the open air. Once, Joan's natural shrewdness nearly detected the secret of their route. She remarked on the smallness of the sheep they passed, and said they were no bigger than six-months old lambs.

"And yet," said La Hire, "they afford us the best mutton in France."

"One would think, then," said she, quickly, "that they were of the breed of Sologne!"

"This comes of talking to a shepherdess," thought he; but he said nothing, and she suspected no evil, but began to wonder at the tedious length of their journey.

"You will see Orleans," said De Boussac, "from the very next ridge;" and encouraged by this, she rode on.

"Oh!" exclaimed she, in indignation and grief, "the river lies between us! You have deceived me after all!"

"Forgive me, maiden," said De Boussac. "It was by Dunois' order; and the feint was necessary."

"It was *not*!" said she, with flashing eyes. "You have betrayed your trust!"

De Boussac made no answer.

"See," cried La Hire, "there is Dunois with yonder boats. Let us ride down to hear what he has to say."

Dunois waved his hand joyously to them as they approached, and sprang ashore.

"Right welcome, Mareschal!" cried he. "And you too, La Hire! Maid! you need no herald to announce you!"

"Are you the Count de Dunois?" said she.

"I am," said he, "and very glad of your coming."\*

"Was it indeed you," said she, "who directed us to come by Sologne instead of Beauce?"

"Such was," said he, "the advice of our wisest captains."

"They were wrong, they were wrong," said Joan. "The Lord is wiser than they. You thought to deceive me, but you have

\* "Oui," reprit il, "et bien joyeux de votre venue."

only outwitted yourselves.\* Let no time be lost now in embarking the supplies."

"But a storm is coming on," expostulated De Boussac, "and the wind is contrary."

"The wind will *change*, faint-hearted man!" said she, impetuously.

"Well, well," said he, "there will be a downright squall, but, since you insist, I will give the necessary orders."

And in a few minutes all was activity and commotion.

"Marshal!" cried Dunois, excitedly, "*the wind has changed!*"

De Boussac started, and looked about him.  
"It certainly has," said he.

\* Barante.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE squall which the Mareschal had spoken of now came on in full force, bending the heads of trees violently to the ground as it swept on its course. Vivid lightning rent the clouds, and thunder rolled overhead, and though it was scarcely sunset, the gloom amounted almost to darkness. The advantage this gave them in embarking close to the English fort of St. Jean le Blanc, and the impressive fact of the wind having suddenly changed in their favour, were improved on by Father Pasquerel and the priests of Blois, whose voices were heard above the storm, animating the soldiers by their exhortations.

"Mareschal, you are coming with us?" cried Dunois, eagerly.

"Certainly not," replied De Boussac, "my duty is to return for the other convoy."

Dunois looked exasperated.

"Are none of you coming to help us?" said he, his deep blue eyes glancing from one face to another.

"Faith, I will," said La Hire. "Come, Mareschal, give me a couple of hundred lances."

"So be it, then," said De Boussac, "only I call it downright madness. However, good luck attend you. You are embarking under the very nose of St. Jean le Blanc, and the English will pour their fire into you directly you are off. Your beef and mutton will soon be eaten, and then you will thank me for having gone for a fresh supply. Some of those barges will go down

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if you overload them so. Was ever such a hurricane? I can scarce hear myself speak. Farewell, Maid! You are a stout heart, at all events. Cheer up the besieged, and say I am bringing them succours. Mind that horse, sirrah! you'll throw him down. He'll walk the plank well enough if you are steady. Dunois, I really think—ha, ha! there goes my plume. Well, the English will hardly come out and look after you in such weather as this, that's one good thing. Adieu, De Poulengey; adieu, De Metz: ye are true hearts. Farewell, La Hire, old friend! Father Pasquerel, since you will have the priests of Blois, see to it they do the only good they can, and keep up the excitement."

De Boussac, thus talking while others were doing, watched the embarkation and *then instantly marched his troops homewards*,

telling something within him that he was doing the very best thing possible—which that something within him seemed rather to doubt.

Meanwhile, the heavily freighted barges were sailing before the wind under cover of the advancing night; and Dunois' spirits rose like those of a boy. He was now twenty-five years of age, and the bravest knight in France; inheriting much of his mother's beauty, but having no earthly parent to thank for his goodness and spirit. It would be very easy to sink him into a mere hero of romance, a purpose I utterly disdain: his own good deeds are his praise.

"Maid!" said he, "you will save us. You shows you to be His angel of deliverance, making the winds speed us on our way, concealing us from the foe by clouds of darkness."

“But how bad it was of the Mareschal to go back,” said Joan, “and to deceive me by coming through Sologne !”

“You must forgive him,” said Dunois. “We really had pre-arranged it.”

“The Lord has taken the matter out of your hand,” said she, reproachfully. “You need nothing but to obey Him. What are your earthly generals, in comparison with Him ?”

“Certainly,” said Dunois, “it must be admitted that though we have many brave captains, we have no consummate general.”

“You will be one, shortly,” observed La Hire.

“I ?” said he, impatiently. “A man without a name ?”

“You will make yourself one, that will go down to future times.”

“Heaven grant it,” said he. “We seem to

be less than men, when we look to a woman to help us."

"My strength is in the Lord of Hosts," said Joan. "You know well that I can do nothing of myself."

"I can hardly believe the strange things I have heard of you," said Dunois; "they sound like the old romances that one reads in the window-seat of some old castle. Can it be that you were only a shepherd-girl of Domremy?"

"Truly I was none other."

"And the holy saints came and spoke to you?"

"They gave me a message to the king that I should raise the siege of Orleans."

"But how?"

"Be patient, time will show."

He looked wistfully at her; there was no trace of deceit. But he thought she might be an innocent enthusiast.

The storm had now spent its violence, and the moon now and then appeared for a moment, as if travelling fast through the troubled clouds that swept the sky—fitfully revealing the dark outlines of the city, the cathedral, and the heavy old nineteen-arched bridge, the chasm in which was frowned over on the southern side by Sir William Gladstone's fort, “*Les Tournelles*.”

“There lies Glacidas,” said Dunois, in a low voice; “and there, on the bank, is the famous bastion the English call ‘London.’”

Joan and her companions listened with breathless interest as he related, in subdued tones, the story of the siege, and strained their eyes as though they would pierce the gloom as he pointed out the dimly-discerned objects. A light that twinkled on the bank was suddenly concealed: they thought they were watched, but they floated quietly on.

Joan asked whether there were any good woman in Orleans with whom she could lodge.

"A lodging is provided for you," replied Dunois, "in the Rue du Tabourg, at the house of the Duke of Orleans' treasurer, Jacques Bouchier, as respectable a man as any in the town. His house is close to the town wall, by the Porte Renard; and his wife Colette, and his daughter Charlotte, will treat you like a daughter of the house."

"But is there room," said Joan, "for my brothers, for the Sires De Poulengey and De Metz, and for my other attendants?"

"Yes, yes," said Dunois, "there is accommodation for you all."

"What is that?" said she, starting violently, as a heavy sound broke the stillness.

"That," said he, smiling, "is a cannon-shot, which we have become accustomed to,

though you, perhaps, hear it for the first time."

She said, "It is very terrible, and very grand."

They were now winding among the low, long sand-banks or islands that began to be seen dimly heaving in narrow, yellow lines from the river, and on which, if they had fixed, they might have remained till morning, to fall an unresisting prey to the English. Happily this fate was averted by careful pilotage; and as they stole along, nearer and yet nearer the city, and within range of the English guns, the silence was so intense that Joan's quickened ear could distinctly catch the low ripple of the water against the side of the barge, making soft music. It was what the Italians call a supreme moment. All at once they were startled, as if by a shot, by all the church-clocks sounding the first

stroke of eight, led by the heavy-booming cathedral bell—

“Swinging slow with solemn roar.”

At the same time, the English drums began to beat to quarters—a summons evidently responded to in an unruly manner by several convivial spirits. Guard was relieved; flambeaux and lanterns gleamed from tower, bridge, and bastion, and sent long, perpendicular, red reflections to the river below. On the town side of the Loire was heard a continuous, hollow murmur as of thousands of persons speaking under their breath; a woman’s call in some distant street of “salt fish, salt fish!” that sounded like a wail or cry. No bark of dogs; they had all been eaten!

A little shock against the bank,—a rope thrown,—and they were fixed. A crowd of

persons, who seemed to have been silently watching them, now pressed forward.

"Is she here?—Where is she?" they eagerly whispered.

"Here; she is here," said Dunois, putting Joan into the extended arms of the brave old governor, De Gaucourt; and tears coursed down the old man's furrowed cheeks.

"God bless you, my dear!" was his homely welcome, as he took the unyielding steel-clad figure of the girl to his heart. She put her head on his shoulder for an instant, and gave one little quivering sob; for her feelings were highly wrought. But it would not do to weep then!

"The Maid is come! the Maid is come!" screamed several scarce human-sounding voices. Oh, what a cry rang through the famished city! It seemed to give one great sob, and then burst out into an ecstasy of rejoicing. But the

sob and the laughter did not cease there: it rose wilder and louder—the sick and wounded dragged themselves from their beds to their casements, and leant out crying—“What is it? what is it?” “Joan the Maid! Joan the Maid!” “O merciful Father!”

The tumult grew wilder and wilder as the news spread to distant quarters. Every alley, court, and lane poured its tributary stream into the main streets. “Joan the Maid!” “Joan the Maid!” passed from mouth to mouth, in frantic accents. “Blessed girl! where, where is she?” cried the women; and some of them, faint with hunger and long suspense, fell into hysterical fits of laughter; while men covered their faces and wept. All the church bells were set clanging, the cathedral became one blaze of light, and priests and choristers hurried on their surplices for “Te Deum.” The English, startled at the

uproar, were beating to arms ; and now and then a rocket came whizzing through the air.

Meanwhile, every one was pressing to see, to touch the Maid, as, mounted on a noble white charger, whose housings swept the ground, she entered the gates (for she had landed outside the walls), and slowly made her way to the cathedral, with Dunois, on his black war-horse, on her left hand, and followed by “les vaillans seigneurs de sa suite,”\* and by the officers and soldiers of the garrison. The citizens, the troops, the women, the children, all held themselves delivered now she was among them, and were anxious to look on her, and touch her, as some sacred thing. Happy to have one glimpse of her glowing, kindly face, and bright eyes shining with tears, they carried home fabulous reports of her

\* Barante.

beauty. The tide rolled on to the cathedral, a far more ancient pile than now exists under that name, and rich in storied windows of painted glass. There they sang "Te Deum," as well they might.

Had it not been for the lean cheeks and hollow eyes of all and sundry, it might have been thought the old city was wholly given over to joy and festivity. But it was the joy of hungry people who trusted to be fed on the morrow, and of citizens, closed seven months within their city gates, who expected soon to be free.

The Sire de Gaucourt had made a great supper for Joan, and would have led her to it as soon as the service was over; but she said, "Dear sir, I cannot feast in a starving city; the meat would choke me. Give my share to the poor; and, if it please you, let me go to my lodging."

The governor looked a little disappointed, but said—

“ Well, well; since ye will have it so, it shall even be as ye say.”

So she rode, with Dunois still at her side, and her train close following, to the Rue du Tabourg; and the people shouted “Vive la Pucelle!” and “Vive Dunois!”

Jacques Bouchier and his wife were well pleased to receive so honourable a guest. The house no longer stands, though one on its site is shown for it. The table was covered with the whitest of damask, and with some old-fashioned pieces of plate; and De Poulengey and De Metz were not sorry, when Dunois was gone, to see one or two smoking hot dishes make their appearance.

But no hospitality could tempt Joan to do more than mix some wine and water in a silver cup, and break some pieces of bread

into it, on which she supped; and this was the first food she had taken that day.\* It had been arranged that she was to sleep with

\* "Après que la Pucelle fust entrée à Orléans le Vendredi, 29<sup>e</sup> jour de l'Avril de l'année 1429, par la Porte Bourgogne, accompagnée des bourgeois et gens d'armes qui estoient allés à sa rencontre jusqu'à Checy, . . . ils l'accompagnèrent tout le long de la grande rue qui traverse la ville, et la conduisirent depuis la porte Bourgogne jusqu'à après de la porte Renard en l'hostel de Jacques Bouchier, pour lors thrésorier du duc d'Orléans, où elle feust honorablement reçut et logée avec ses deux frères, et les deux gentilhommes et leur valet, qui estoient venus avec elle du païs de Barrois. On lui avoit faist appareiller à souper bien et honorablement; mais elle fist seulement mettre du vin dans une tasse d'argent, où elle mist moitié d'eau, et cinq ou six soupes dedans, qu'elle mangea, et ne prist austre chose tout ce jour, pour manger ni boire, quoiqu'elle euste été tout le jour à cheval: puis s'alla coucher en la chambre qui lui avoit esté ordonnée: et avec elle estoient la femme et la fille du dict thrésorier, la quelle fille coucha avec la dicte Jeanne." The distrustful reader will thank me for verifying details here and there.

Charlotte, Bouchier's eldest daughter; and, as she retired with her for the night, De Poulengey, holding out his hand to her with a cheerful smile, said—

"I think you have reason to be satisfied with this day's work."

"Ah! what do you call work?" said she.  
"Mine is but just beginning."

END OF VOL. I.











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